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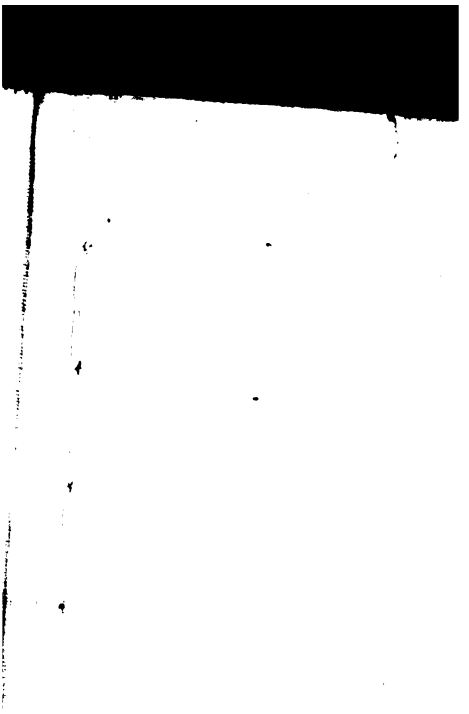

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"There'll be many a Highland lad that'll lie in alien land; but Minniglen will come back to the heather."

[PAGE 299]

MINNIGLEN

BY

AGNES AND EGERTON CASTLE

AUTHORS OF

"WOLF LURE," "WIND'S WILL," "THE HOPE OF THE HOUSE," ETC.

FRONTISPIECE BY

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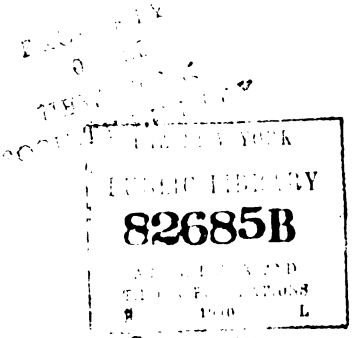

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MINNIGLEN

CHAPTER I

GLENORCHAR CASTLE faced the moor with a challenge. With much the same air of blatant mastery was its owner wont to stand upon the broad new terraces—a hand in each pocket jingling coins and keys, white-spatted feet planted firmly apart—surveying his new acquisition. The deer forest, the hills, the dark loch, all had become his indeed. But, save at those hours when the fumy passage of the motor launch broke the reflections of wood and mountain on the placid waters, Glenorchar defied the cotton spinner and his money: the personality of the stranger remained as alien to the wild, mysterious land as did the excrescence of stone and mortar, turreted, battlemented, madly begabled, which called itself Glenorchar Castle.

For the cynic, it has been said, everything has a price and nothing has a value. To cross the threshold of Lord Weyford's residence in the Highlands was to receive an object-lesson in the power of money—and in its limits; to discover how things of themselves priceless, can be robbed of all value. The Vandyke cavalier, with the lovelocks falling about his face, with the tragedy and greatness of a lost cause and the premo-

nition of an early death stamped in high dignity on his young beauty—what was his presentment doing on the walls of the Darlington spinner? The man who had bought it was careful that there should be no mistake as to the manner of its coming there. "This picture," an ornamental silver plate let into the preposterous, curveting new frame proclaimed, "was purchased at the Brooksbury House sale, on November 11, 1902, by the First Baron Weyford of Millbridge, for the sum of Fifteen Thousand guineas.

"Looks a bit more worth its money, in that frame, don't it?" the first baron would say, pointing with an unwittingly contemptuous gesture of his thick forefinger towards the rich dim canvas. "Cost a hundred and fifty pounds, that frame did," he was careful to add. He liked things to look worth their money. That was the standard of merit.

"Those two suits of armor, now, on either side of the door, regular scrap iron they were. It took 'em a fortnight to furbish them up to my liking." They shone indeed like a new knife.

That knightly armor that had shielded the strong heart of a Clifford through the valley of Agincourt; that corslet, those cuishes and taslets, first hammered in exquisite curves to fit the stripling limbs of the seventeen-year-old heir of Beauchamp—he that fell on Bosworth Field,—glittered from their sentinel post in the millionaire's hall, with all the aggressiveness of a dentist's polished door-plate. It needed in truth the placards—silver placards—narrating their noble origin, their passage through world-known collections

(and their cost to the ultimate purchaser) to disabuse the visitor of his first impression that here were very superior "panoplies" straight from Sheffield.

"Money," hit you in the eye from every side: what money could achieve, and what money could destroy. The things that money can buy, the concrete unmistakable objects; they were there, and in surfeiting profusion. The things that no money can buy, the spiritual essence, the poetry, the romance, the dream, the fitness and harmony; the things that can not be handled, weighed nor paid for, yet which are the soul and the life of all art, beauty and inheritance—these had fled from the spot.

No doubt, had such an arrangement been possible, Lord Weyford would have liked to hang little placards —appropriately golden and jeweled—round the necks of his most distinguished guests: that none might ignore either their quality or the amount of capital of which they were, so to speak, interim dividends.

This thought, indeed, flashed whimsically across the mind of Anne Joscelyn, as she sat in the shadow of one of the great carved jambs of the armoried stone chimney, and let her gaze roam, unnoticed, contemplating her surroundings and her fellow guests.

Opposite her hung the sad cavalier and she fancied that his eyes fixed her with a kind of wondering reproach. "What are you doing here?" they asked her. "My price is branded for all to see. But what are you doing in such a place, last living of my race?"

"How should I be branded?" questioned Anne of herself. "What is my price? Was it the Opera Box at

Covent Garden—Yes, I think it was that seat, that seat in the corner of Lady Weyford's box on the Grand Tier—— The Ring music, and the orchestra under Nikisch—that bought me. A handsome price, too: a week at Glenorchar Castle is not too much to give in exchange for, oh, those hours, those golden, unforgettable hours! Well, there is the duchess—anyone can buy the duchess: unlimited bridge——"

It was a dull, rainy day, this thirteenth of September, and the gentlemen (as Lady Weyford persisted in calling her male guests, to her more sophisticated daughter's annoyance) had started with the dawn on that very special deerstalk for which it was the business of Lord Weyford's keepers to secure a hecatomb. Lady Weyford and her fair guests thus found themselves abandoned to their own resources—"rotten arrangement," Lady Penelope, the very modern daughter of the Duchess of Hampshire, had declared when discontentedly surveying the strictly feminine lunch table.

A very select party it was: "representative," as Miss Bradles, who took the rôle of Greek *choros* in the daily drama of Lady Weyford's social life, would often be heard to remark.

"She's worse than the pianola," said Lady Brooksbury to her special friend, Mrs. Markham.

They had drawn together in front of the hearth, and Lady Brooksbury was stretching languid feet to the blaze. Great logs were always kept burning, summer and winter, night and day, on the mount of white ash within the cavern of the medieval chimney. Miss Bradles was fond of drawing attention to the pictur-

esque detail as a part of the baronial traditions of Glenorchar Castle—this in spite of the fact, known to everyone, that twenty years at most had been the development of the original little shooting lodge, lost on the margin of Loch Warroch, into the imposing structure at first called Orchar House, the residence of Sir Warren Hanks, and more latterly (with the rising status of its owner and after the addition of turrets and corbiesteps) as Glenorchar Castle.

"Worse than the pianola," said Lady Brooksbury, turning haunted eyes upon her companion. And indeed, through every pause between one strident ragtime and another, Miss Bradles' pattering tones, interspersed with little explosions of irrelevant laughter, rang to the echoes of the great hall.

"Pianola?" repeated Mrs. Markham—she was sitting on a fender stool, clasping her knees, with a generous display of slender leg clad in crimson silk and absurd Russia leather brogues of the same hue—"why it's a super-up-to-date electric auto-fluto-viola-playelle. It was specially built for Lord Weyford of Millbridge, on Lady Weyford's own instructions, and it cost two thousand guineas. And Schwarzheimers send a special deputation north twice a year to keep it in tune. And that costs—I forget how much . . ." She yawned. "Here's Miss Cherry Bradles herself coming over, she'll tell you."

Preceded by the sound of her own laughter, which suggested the spluttering of an amiable mitrailleuse, the deputy-hostess came up to the hearth and added a patent leather shoe to the assortment spread to the glow.

"Too bad of the weather, to have turned so horrid, isn't it? Why don't you three dears come and see how high you can kick to the music? Lady Pen has just broken the record. But I feel sure you could go one better, Mrs. Markham. Such pretty ankles, too!"

Mrs. Markham looked down dispassionately at her limbs, and murmured that she did think her "tock-tocks" rather "pets."

"I never dance in the daytime," said Lady Brooksbury in her tragic voice.

Miss Bradles paused on a splutter. It is difficult for the uninitiated to adapt an ordinary intelligence to the different social atmospheres in which the best cliques move and intermingle. Lady Brooksbury happened to be "all soul" and, as Mrs. Markham, now contemplating her leg from a new angle cooed sympathetically: "Still dyspeptic, darling?" Miss Bradles forthwith embarked upon an account of Lady Weyford's specially complicated stomachic troubles and her extra-superior corrective pill—recommended by Sir Gregory Welbeck, the only sure, the almost unapproachable oracle. Lady Brooksbury, however, speaking across her as if she did not exist, flung back, with lazy malice, the dart aimed at her by her friend.

"Dyspeptic? No wonder, my poor darling, you should always turn to this revolting point of view: such a lunch as you ate! I really could not look across the table. I was longing to go away with my little green fig and drink my glass of white wine in a corner of the garden. Oh, I don't want to talk about it! Do let's forget our own wretched bodies!"

Miss Bradles, discomfited, took refuge in her cachinnation. A shout of noisy laughter from the further end of the room made an opportune diversion. The tango music struck up once more its blatant mechanical invitation. The group of girls and women—some of them in spite of elaborate artifice quite obviously beyond the dancing days of life—broke into gyrating couples.

"Isn't the duchess a dear?" cried Miss Bradles in ecstasy, surveying the fashionable gamboling with eyes of complete satisfaction. "I always tell her she is younger than her daughters. Well, Carrie will feel that she's laid out her money wisely when she had that Autoplayer made. 'It will cost you a cool thou my lady,' said Schwarzsheimer, you know how these creatures speak, and Carrie said: 'Make it two thou——' " here the *mitrailleuse* went off again—" 'let it be the best piece of mechanism that ever left your works: I want it for my guests,' said Carrie, in her dear, simple way. 'When my sister, Lady Weyford, of Millbridge says that, Mr. Schwarzheimer,' said I to him, 'you had better look out, for she will not be satisfied with anything but——' "

Miss Bradles had to scream at the top of a naturally piercing voice to make herself audible above the strident joy-lilt of the dance music, and the rocketing laughter of those it inspired. Mrs. Markham, who had openly exchanged a look of intelligence with Lady Brooksbury, put her fingers to her ears; and Miss Bradles seized the opportunity to turn her attention to Miss Joscelyn.

"And why isn't Nancy dancing?" she asked sportively.

"You mean me?" said the girl, straightening herself and lifting her dark eyebrows with a faint surprise. She hardly knew Miss Bradles. She did not like people taking liberties with her name, and her name was Anne.

Lydia Markham flung herself backwards and stretched out a long slim arm to pinch Miss Joscelyn's gray clad foot. Then, shifting herself so that she sat propped up against the girl's knee, she gazed into the room, and burst out laughing.

"Do look at Auntie Hampshire caracoling with Pen! Isn't she like a dear old cow with a little bad kid?"

"I always think her so Shakespearean," said Anne Joscelyn, seriously.

"Shakespearean!" echoed Lady Brooksbury in that tragic contralto voice which her sycophantic circle compared to the note of a mourning dove.

"Why—yes, Falstaff," said Anne, following with grave eyes the portly form through its laborious pounding round the room, and quoted: "We that are in the vanguard of our youth . . .'"

Mrs. Markham and Lady Brooksbury stared, Cherry Bradles broke into peppering laughter.

"I think," she said, "the tango would make us all Falstaffian—larding the lean earth, you know.'

Her wits were brisk enough; but ingrained respect for the strawberry leaves prevented her from admitting any but a general application.

Lady Brooksbury shuddered.

"Shakespeare can be so coarse, at times," was her thought—but on the lips of Miss Bradles quite unbearably so. Her look of disdain discomfited the little

woman again. Anne had not laughed either; and Lydia Markham, irritated by anything that was outside her mental range, was frankly bored. Miss Bradles was glad enough, therefore, when the object of Miss Joscelyn's grave mockery stopped in her gyration, advanced staggering, and let herself fall apoplectically into the vacant armchair by the chimney—blocking from sight the *argent lion passant regardant*, langued and clawed gules, of Weyford who seemed to be heraldically jeering at his own presence (between three mill wheels of the same) on the Hanks escutcheon.

The duchess's partner, a pretty, red-lipped, cocked-nosed girl, made a hideous grimace at Mrs. Markham behind her exalted mother's unconscious back; kicked derisively into the air, flung out her arms in expressive pantomime of relief, and waltzed off alone, farcically exaggerating the rhythm.

"Pen is getting above herself," said Lydia Markham, in the soft voice with which she, and those of her set, enunciated their most malicious sentiments, following the flying figure with inimical eyes. "Dear Brooksbury made a positive fool of her, last night."

"You see, darling," said Lord Brooksbury's wife, in her deep, slow voice, "Brooksbury—loved her mother so!—or was it her grandmother?—I forget. It was a wonderful story."

A melodious sigh floated out in a pause of the auto-viola-playelle's activities. The duchess's voice, which through the din had been uplifted quite as frankly as that of Miss Bradles, was now left unsupported:

"Well, just a nip of Crême de Menthe, perhaps."

Miss Bradles was already pressing the electric button.

"Carrie thought, duchess——" There is a theological opinion that certain worldlings, obviously unripe for heaven, may be permitted to have their share of Paradise on earth. If that be really the case, Miss Bradles nearly approached her Eden when she was able thus familiarly to address her sister's guest. "Carrie thought you might like a little game of bridge."

The duchess made clutches at different parts of her ample person, to assure herself that cigarette case, chain purse and matchbox were safely attached. Tango she practiced because, with her, to be out of any excitement would have been tantamount to being out of life: but gambling was her only real joy.

Lydia Markham again smiled at Lady Brooksbury.

"Half-crown points, and our Adeliza to win as usual, I suppose," she said, as her Grace, who had risen again, with alacrity, moved away with the deputy hostess. "Well, old Hanky-Panks can afford it, we know. I suppose it is worth all that to her to have a real live duchess. Cherry Bradles will have to be her sister's partner to-day, since they haven't got a rival plutocrat to draw upon. I don't think the old man from the Argentine quite liked it, last night. Do you?"

"Darling, I didn't look at him." A yawn robbed Lady Brooksbury's contralto of some of its dramatic quality. "Isn't he the cattle king, or something loathly of that sort? Kind of butcher on the colossal scale? I was so thankful the gory creature did not take me in to dinner."

"My sweetest, you're too, too fastidious for this world. I can tell you our Pen has her little bright eye upon him. Poor lamb, she's in such depths of debt! Do you know those sordid wretches Gulland and Gulland refused to send her any more nighty things till she had paid their odious bill! And it's the only place in London where they have those jolly little china gauzes powdered with pink roses. You bet she means to make your beef colossus——"

"Ah—" broke in Lady Brooksbury, "I thought there was a shadow on Pen's radiant brow."

"Dermot has cut up rough," proceeded Lydia Markham. "She did have such a rotten Ascot week, poor little Angel. He told her he loved her, always, but he'd be particularly somethinged if he paid another debt for her. 'Can't you rope in some fellow with money? Some old chap who'd think it awfully nobby to write cheques for a little peach?' And——"

"Ah—" Lady Brooksbury interrupted in low, lamenting harmony, "what hard hearts some men have! A creature like Pen, so lovely, so full of joy, should have all, all, that life can give her, as a right. They ought to give to her as the sun gives to the flowers, in pure ecstasy at her preciousness. When I see Pen, I long to put my hands about her little face, and look deep into her eyes, and say: 'Pen, my darling, how golden of you to be just your golden self!'"

"Wouldn't dear Brooksbury write a little cheque—in memory of her grandmother, and just to please you?"

Anne Joscelyn got up and walked disgustedly away. She was twenty-eight, and this was the atmosphere in

which she had had to move for ten years—an atmosphere steadily becoming more difficult to breathe in, ever more charged with poison as season followed season. There were times, as now, when she felt she must get out of it at all cost; break some window, if need be, but get out into clean air; force some door and go forth into freedom, even if there should be no return.

She crossed the room, mounted the steps of the window recess and looked through the diamond panes between the stone mullions. The rainy morning had concentrated into mist; lake and wood and moorlands were hidden away beneath a ragged white pall that shifted and rolled and took weird forms; rising denser from the waters, tearing themselves slowly among the black firs, creeping ever closer around the house with a stealthy relentlessness, so that, even as she looked, the lower terrace became swathed and the balustrades began to lose all outline as in a milky sea.

The girl gave a little shiver: that temporary escape she was planning seemed less desirable. She turned again; and, leaning her back on the mullion, gazed into the great hall, pondering. The oriel recess was all stone, so recently constructed that it smelt raw, "like a new vault," thought Anne. The hall itself was warm enough; paneled to an unusual height in carved wood lavishly picked out in the inevitable gilding that proclaimed Lord Weyford's great worth. There was a strong, close scent of oak—"Down there it smells like a coffin," Anne ruefully concluded. All the passing figures seemed to her, suddenly, *macabre:* a dance of death to the tune of some infernal hurdy-gurdy. Oh,

rather the mist, the drip, the chill, the forlorn call of the unseen waterfalls. . . . Rather, a hundred times, the bodily discomfort, but to be with nature in her austere solitude. "I must get out," thought Anne Joscelyn, and went quickly forth, down the length of the great room, through the arches, and up the wastes of staircase.

With idly appraising eyes, Lady Brooksbury and her gossip watched the tall figure until it disappeared.

"Dear Anne is looking dreadfully worn," said Lydia Markham. "If the Hanky Pankies——" she passed as good fun in her set by such cheap jocularity, even Lady Brooksbury paid her the tribute of a faded smile —"if they only knew, poor dears, it is twice as fine a feather in their caps to have got your cousin Anne up here than forty Adelizas! Did you hear Cherry Bradles patronizing, 'Won't our Nancy dance?' and see Anne with her Stuart look? Lord!" cried Lydia, extending her legs and stretching out her arms with her abandoned gesture, "what is the good of not taking life as it comes? Look at Anne, she must be over thirty and she's faded, she——"

"She walks the earth like a goddess," said the other broodingly, "and she looks—darling Anne—she looks as a descendant of a martyred king ought to look. Melancholy, apart. Proud, proud!"

"What is the good of it?" Lydia Markham smiled, while her green eyes looked all the malice that her silky tones strove to wrap about. "She's as poor as—well, poor and proud, a bad mixture. And, oh, what a life she has of it with her old father, in that dreadful slit

of a house at the back of Eaton Square! Poor old Jasper Joscelyn is getting quite *gaga*, too. I thought the fascinating Sidney was casting sheep's eyes at her, last night. Didn't you notice? She'd much better take him."

"Poor Anne, she couldn't," murmured Lady Brooksbury.

"Well, if you think it's more poetic to wither away on a maiden stem, on tuppence a year and all the musty Joscelyn traditions! Serves her right, anyhow, turning up her nose at everybody. That jolly little man at the Chilean legation, who dances so well—what's his name?—just summed it up after dinner: '*Quand ca peut, ca ne veut pas: quand ca veut, ca ne peut pas.*' "

"Oh, my dear—such a bounder! I don't think it's fair to ask people to meet that kind of foreigner. Brooksbury always says: 'Only the embassies.' And I quite agree with him."

CHAPTER II

ANNE wished to slip out unobserved, and therefore did not ring for her maid. Poverty, even as expressed by "tuppence a year," is a relative term; she was not deprived of the necessaries of social existence. Anne had a maid. She laced up her long, thick boots, flung on her doeskin coat and a leather hat to match, then paused a moment before her mirror, contemplating her visage.

She agreed with Mrs. Markham's estimate of her looks; yet it was not so much her countenance that she saw in the glass as the soul that looked out of it. "You poor thing, how worn you are! What is the good of struggling—why cannot you give in? Since you have a comfortable seat offered you, why cannot you sit down?"

There was a seat offered to her. She could not mistake the gaze which the son of the house, "the honorable Sidney," was beginning to fix upon her. All the Hanks money, Glenorchar Castle in Scotland, Weyford Abbey in the south, the mansion in Grosvenor Square, the yacht at Cowes, the villa at Cannes . . . all might be hers, one day, if she could bring herself to the bargain. She wanted freedom; wanted to get away from an insufferable life. Would not money mean freedom, marriage, independence, comfort also to her

father's last years? More than comfort: she knew very well that it would be bringing to him the desire of his whole life. Poor, dear, old, broken-spirited man, he would not examine too closely the means that assured to his descendants the heritage of his forefathers. Joscelyn Court was let; when he died it would have to be sold, passed to a far-away cousin, unless Anne married a man rich enough to buy him off by the breaking of the entail. What would a mere trifle of domestic felicity matter? What would the origin, manners, even the morals of a son-in-law matter to such great issues? Why could she not give in, after all, and sit down?

She was directed, by a surprised footman, through some stone passages to a back door of the castle, and found herself in the stable yard, as for want of a more up-to-date name, it had to be called. It was indeed a vastly imposing courtyard, round which garages, coach houses, stables, and what Miss Bradles (with a confused recollection of a noble residence whose master also happened to be M.F.H.) termed the Home Kennels. There was a clock tower in the central buildings; and, lower down in the façade, an immense stone carving of the Weyford Arms, surmounted by the coronet—the clumped balls of which the first baron fully intended should grow from that sprouting stage to the further dignity of stalks.

The mist had lifted a little, for a light wind was rising and was moaning faintly round the stone corbies and through the hammered iron gates that faced each other on either side of the yard. A man was leaning against the half-open door of one of the garages.

He came forward with slouching step. She thought at first it was a groom, and was about to pass him indifferently, when she heard her name called out:

"Miss Joscelyn, by Jove! Come to have a look at the horses, Miss Joscelyn, what?"

It was the son of the house.

Anne was annoyed. She felt herself flush—an unusual weakness, and for such an absurd cause as Sidney Hanks!

"I thought you were all away, deerstalking," she said, her tone intimating that, in her opinion, any occupation that kept him at a distance would have been welcome to her.

She was, rather aimlessly, moving towards one of the gates when, to her further vexation, he began to walk beside her, with his loose, deliberately horsey slouch.

"Stalking? Not good enough—did y' ever see such weather?" The "honorable Sidney's" pronunciation was as slouching as his movements. He had a straw in his mouth, besides, which he was turning round and round. "Couldn't stand the *pater*," he added confidentially, "makin' a fool of himself. Holdin' forth and layin' down the law, and the keepers fit to bust, listenin' to him. Lor'——"

He broke off; and after a fruitless effort to loop the straw with his tongue, spat it out. Fixing her with his small black, shrewd eyes—frank enough, and kindly, and full of a feeling no honest man need have been ashamed of—he came back to his first question:

"Havin' a look round?"

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Anne, and was furious to feel the blood again racing to her forehead. Could it be possible? One never knew. The creature might think she was taking stock. "I wanted a walk—by myself," she added hastily.

"Oh, I say! In this mist! Better let me come with you, what?"

She lifted her eyes, ready to emphasize her refusal, but paused, just because of that dog-like pleading in his enamored stare. Anne had a very soft heart for dogs and all dumb things. He could not help being common, no more than a cur can help being a cur. He could not help his riches and the vulgarity of their display. It was no fault of his, either, that the unholy power of money, in a sordid society, should make it possible for such as he to look at Anne Joscelyn from the standpoint of equality—worse, with thoughts of love! Yet, his air of anxious humility, so contrary to the whole attitude of Hanks, touched her. But the moment she seemed to relent, he, in her opinion, presumed.

"You'll let me come. Good. By George, I'm glad I cut the stalking show! Let's toddle." He put out a familiar hand; almost, not quite, closing about her elbow. "Let's toddle, for if any of them caught sight of us, Lor'! That girl, Pen, now, I'm afraid of her. Afraid, 'pon honor I am. She positively tracks a fellow. What?"

The ejaculation was not now a mere catch word, learned from that fashionable set of young bloods with whom he had inevitably foregathered at the University.

It was expressive of acute disappointment: there was no mistaking the movement with which Anne stepped back from his touch, her icy glance, the finality in her tone, as she said:

"I told you I wanted to be alone."

"I could not do it," she told herself, walking away. Then she laughed a little. "Something sprang up in me, without as much as consulting me—I wonder what it was? All the Joscelyns of old, perhaps. It is settled, anyhow—and I am glad." She laughed again. "Poor wretch, he looked as if I had slapped him in the face!"

But the last of the Joscelyns knew very little of the mind and feelings of the second of the Weyfords. His ardor flamed the hotter for her ice. Apart from the fact that he belonged to the very ordinary class of youth to whom love is almost identical with the instinct of the chase; to whom hunting and "bringing down" represent the ideal of passion, he had been himself, for the last three seasons, a quarry so "chivied" (as he might himself have expressed it) in the matrimonial preserves; so many enterprising daughters and pursuing mothers had stalked him, dug pits for him, endeavored, in short, by so many open or secret ways to "bag" him, that Anne Joscelyn's attitude was stimulating and enigmatic.

The hackneyed classical simile which even Lady Brooksbury did not ignore was outside his ken; but his thought was not so far removed from the Virgilian *et vera incessu patuit dea.* "Gad, what action! A fellow need only see her walk to know she's a well-bred

one. Not one of them can hold a candle to her!" He had no real doubt either of himself or of the future as the clang of the gate behind Anne's figure marked her determined abandonment of him. Was she not poor, as poor as she was proud? Faith in the power of money is the millionaire's creed—and how can he fail to believe when the power of that god is demonstrated hour by hour? "I'll give her five minutes' start," said he to himself, "and then go after her."

A stray beam of sunshine struck across the wet world between two drifting clouds. Like a finger of fire it kindled where it touched bracken hollow, turning birch and wild cherry broke into flame. There was a wild scent in the air, and the gusts that shook the gleaming drops from the trees blew against Anne's cheek with a wild message. Her heart swelled, as many a time before, with a yearning she could not define. Something seemed to urge without, and to answer within. She knew not what the urging was, nor what it was that responded; but she felt that could she but understand it, could she but reach it, she would find the true meaning of life.

She made her way through a drenched garden path towards where the burn ran crying to the loch. On the bridge she paused—the new stone bridge that bestrode the narrow bed of the stream in mock medieval aggressiveness, with mighty arch and battlemented parapet.

The stream was in spate. And, crowned with amber foam, the eddies swirled vertiginously, translucent gold where the sun ray pierced, wine deep in the shadows. Her head swam a little as she gazed. The torrent, too,

had a message for her, the meaning of which was not found; but as she followed its rush to the gloomy, troubled bosom of the loch, she shuddered. For it seemed to her as if, like human life, the waters were pressing onward only to death. . . . Was there, after all, no answer, no end but this earthly striving and yearning? Nothing but the hustling and shouldering of each other; the leaping in sunshine and eddying in shadow; the headlong course which is life to all but the cold, final engulfing?

She turned from the chill, outstretched gloom of the waters—far below yonder, out of reach, between its high encircling wooded banks, of that vivifying finger of sunshine—and struck up one of the incongruously metaled paths that intersected the new grounds of Glenorchar Castle. It led, as a signpost obligingly informed Lord Weyford's guests, to the falls of Warroch. The wind was blowing up dale, but the voice of the falls was loud in the air—that voice which never was silent amid the encircling hills of Grenorchar; which, indeed, was so habitual a sound that it was part of its life; like breathing, normal and unnoted. But Anne remembered it now, vividly. The inarticulate call of adventure, the undefined desire, sprang in her again and drew her on; they took even a kind of shape as the majestic chords of the roar vibrated with a new harmony in her ears—— No, no, the obliterating gulf was not the destiny of life—— "I know that I am a spirit and that I cannot die"—the words from some forgotten lesson of childhood repeated themselves in her mind.

There came a sound of steps behind her; the tramp of a heavy foot upon the stone way of the bridge. The intuition was instant; he had come after her—that odious youth—with the outrageous intention of following his opportunity! She never turned her head or perceptibly quickened her pace; but walked steadily on till an abrupt turn of the path hid her from view. Then she began to run. She was fleet of foot and light of gait. She flew, noiselessly on the side turf, and covered a fair distance before failing breath forced her to stop.

When she had started running her flight had been from the mere boredom of unsympathetic company. But some elements of fear inevitably mingle in a fugitive's mind. The trobbing of her own heart sounded to her like the tramp of a pursuing foot. She imagined her Caliban in close pursuit and looked wildly about her for escape. A way showed itself. It meant climbing between boulders and bushes to the top of the bluff that bastioned the path on the left. She measured the distance and the peril. Her pulses were settling down, she became aware that she was not so closely tracked as, for a moment, she had imagined, but she did not hesitate. "It can be done," she pronounced: and proceeded to do it—not, in truth, without two or three dangerous slips and considerable effort and strain. On hands and knees she reached the top, and continued some way in that undignified manner until she judged herself safe from being marked on the crest line.

Then she stood up, stretched herself, and, laughing, directed her steps towards a pine wood that showed

its blackness against the dull russet of the hill. The stray sunshine had vanished from the skies and the heavy clouds were coalescing again to a universal leaden pall.

It was characteristic of Anne Joscelyn that the moment she felt sure of having baffled Sidney Hanks, he dropped from her thought. It was also characteristic of her that to find herself alone in that strange, forbidding waste was relief, almost exultation. She walked forward, at first aimlessly, through the groups of pines; and then emerging on to the heather again became aware that the great music of the falls had grown louder. And she determined that she would walk towards the falls. She told herself that she could have a picture of beauty in her mind to carry her through the ineffable ineptitudes of the evening; that she would perhaps plunge her memory back into that glory of sound even through the strains of the orchestrelle's tango. She would have gained the unspeakable advantage of seeing the falls by herself—without the offense of Lord Weyford's proprietary gesture, of his consort's smug complacency, of Cherry Bradles' patter; Cherry Bradles, who never failed to speak of the falls as if they were entirely due to the combined genius of her brother-in-law and her sister's wonderful taste.

As the girl walked on, with that free gait that reminded Sidney Hanks of a thoroughbred's pace, there came to her, out of her very satisfaction in solitude, a sudden realization of her great loneliness in the world. She had countless relations and friends—friends in the sense of acquaintances—but there was

not one single human being whom, at that moment, she would like to have near, to share in the visions that lay before her. Not one human hand had she ever touched that she would want to hold now in silent wonder; no eyes had ever looked on her that she would turn her own to for the silent passage of that communing that is too deep for words. Worse, there was no one—she told herself, plunging deeper, as one may in a salt sea wave—no one whose company would not be wearisome. She could not recall (and she was twenty-eight), looking back now on all those years of strenuous intercourse with the world, that she had ever met one human being with whom she could find communion of thought.

Of course she had thought herself in love, more than once. But it had been for such a flash; disillusion had been so swift, and so complete, that the recollection of her inconclusive romances remained in her mind much as would chapters out of novels which had enthralled her for a moment, to be cast away upon the revolt of judgment. "I do not believe," she said to herself, "that I have lived at all. It is quite likely I may go on like this, and never live."

She walked on, at first directing her steps towards the grave sound of the waters; swinging mechanically, only half consciously keeping within the sound of her goal. Memories crowded upon her. . . . Her dreamy, happy childhood, in the exquisite surroundings of the old home; her mother's death; the gradually restricting circle of pecuniary troubles, closing in upon her girlhood; the letting of the Court and the

migration to the narrow limits of the London home. Then her years of emancipation; the dancing hours, the iridescent joys of her young triumphs; the hopes, the fears, the ecstasies, the palpitation—and the disillusion when, one by one, the bubbles broke and life became a kind of sliding scale of bitternesses, little and great. A lover was untrue; a friend was false. She came to know that the "money value"—yes, even the Hanks standard of it—could outweigh even the most golden possibilities of romance; to realize that the delicate flower of perfect sympathy, shyly breaking into perfume and color, could be all at once crushed, flattened out of life, by the heavy tread of common sense, by the Juggernaut of ways and means. She drifted along her thoughts, taking a vague, erratic course, as slender tracks among the heather, suggested this way or that. The pine wood that had sheltered her for a while became a mere ragged, marching company against the horizon. The vast moorland stretched ever wider about her, boulder-strewn, with here and there boggy hollows, sweet with bog myrtle, flecked with the still snow white of the cotton sedge, where the clinking streamlets spread out into pools. The withering heather, sodden by recent rains, was passing from the noble purple-brown of September to that velvet somber depth that makes of the October hills such a wonderful background for the flame of the dying birch.

CHAPTER III

UNDER the lowering sky it had been a black world for Anne Joscelyn with her lonely thoughts. But when, after perhaps an hour, she halted in her roaming and looked about her, it was no longer a black world, but one of an appalling whiteness. Something had brought her to a standstill—a physical oppression; a breath in her nostrils that was almost like the fumes of some unnatural cold fire, suffocating and clammy. Then, suddenly, with an apprehension as yet undefined, though full of menace, she realized the absolute silence. Scarce by straining her ear could she catch a far-away murmur, so distant, so vague and persuasive that it was impossible to tell from what quarter it came.

Whichever way she peered were white seething mists: their touch on her cheek, their taste on her lips, their pall over her eyes, their muffling on her ears. So swiftly, so relentlessly did the vapors seize upon the waste, that even as she looked, the nearest marks were swallowed up—the nearest bush of alder, the last jut of lichened rock obliterated. To steady the fluttering of her heart, she drew a long breath; then faced the situation. She was lost on the moors, in a mist.

To be lost on the moors, in a mist—she knew enough of the Highlands to realize all it meant. In a small circle about her she could still see a narrow track

through the heather. But she had taken such an erratic course, that it meant nothing as a guide. She could not hope to retrace her way, save by the merest, the most improbable, luck, back to the road from which the pursuit of Sidney Hanks had driven her.

Yet even such a track as this, she reasoned, trodden by beast or man, must lead at last to shelter, be it only a shepherd's refuge. Bravely she started again, with an even pace. She had not gone above half an hour when she was forced to stop; the way beneath her feet between the miniature hedges of heather was no longer discernible. At first she thought it was due to an increase of the fogs; but the next moment realized that night was falling.

The swift northern night. Fear took hold of her, a new and more gripping stage of fear. Her heart did not hammer now; it seemed, rather, to stop beating and turn cold within her. Death grinned at her as from a fold in the universal winding sheet. It had been a horrible white around her; now it was a deepening gray. Soon it would be black. Any real, wholesome, natural night-gloom she would have met without quailing. But, here in the dark, she would still feel the dreadful bleached presence, tangible and pressing in on every side, all the more loathingly because it was hidden.

She tried to brace her courage, scolded herself for absurdity. One night on the moors would kill nobody, much less a strong creature such as she. Anne Joscelyn, who never ailed, who had always had a fine, uncomprehending contempt for the puling sisterhood with

its ceaseless bleats of complaint. Yet it was borne in upon her that her one chance was to walk, and walk; that, if she lay down, she would be giving in to the mortal fate tracking her. If she lay down, she would sleep; and sleeping, die.

To death, in the abstract, she had believed herself indifferent—she, who had found life so meaningless. But now the thought of thus giving up the unprofitable gift was repellant. She was seized with a curious anxiety about the poor body, of which she knew so much, when the soul, of whose nature she was so profoundly ignorant, should have abandoned it. The two alternatives were equally odious: it should either lie out on the barren moor to rot and disintegrate, torn by the birds and low carrion creatures from the hollows of the earth, until at last her bones should lie white among the stones under a pitiless sky; or it should be found by a party of searchers, searchers led perhaps by Sidney Hanks—to be examined, pitied, handled; to be pattered about by Cherry Bradles, with Lord Weyford pompously directing the inquest and "the Honorable Sidney," the interesting witness who had last seen her alive, cross-examined as to her state of mind. Rather the ravens, the stoats, a thousand times!

She marched on, sternly checking a tendency to run. Presently, however, she was obliged to proceed by groping steps. It was quite impossible to estimate time. The minutes seemed hours, and she could not even test their dragging passage by consulting her watch. A dreaminess came over her, against which she

struggled, with the nightmare sense of the death lying in wait for that first moment of lapsing.

She jerked herself out of one of those momentary lapses of consciousness and involuntarily quickened her pace. The ground became stonier under her feet; the heath caught at her. She had wandered off the path. She tried to get back to it, seemed to plunge deeper than ever into the sodden mass, stopped and strove to orient her ear to the roar of the falls, struggled this way and that, and again, with extraordinary suddenness, found that even the sound now failed her, and she was lost indeed.

Anne was told, afterwards, by those who tried to reckon the course of her blind wanderings, that she could not have been more than half an hour struggling to recover her guiding path, missing it in desperate, futile circlings. Anne smiled and never contradicted them. She knew that she had been beyond time; that she had dipped outside the circle of life, and that, at the moment when she let herself drop upon the drenched, resilient heather, her spirit at last was on the border of eternity. A strange territory she had found it, peopled with images from the past and the present. Dead faces that she saw without surprise had come forward and faded, looking for a moment at her, so unchanged it seemed and yet so different, with the kindly, gentle human countenance of life, but with eyes of mysterious wisdom. Her mother, her old nurse, the young gardener that had been killed by a falling tree on the old estate, the little cousin's yellow head that had been dancing by her like a butterfly one day and, barely a

week later, had been lying in her little cot, covered with white flowers, with lips the color of her wax doll after they had kissed its roses away.

And after the dead came the living, and Anne felt, as the slow procession advanced and melted away, as if here were the dead while the dead had been alive. Ghosts! Ghosts they were, each and all! And sadness gripped her, she was so sorry for them. The little child who had been herself, the gay, fashionable man who was now her old, sad father. The one she had loved, whom for an hour she had thought king of the world —she saw him as he was at their last meeting, when his immense, throbbing car had by chance been held up in the street, close to her taxi; he was sitting beside the little hook-nosed Jewess with the fortune. And their eyes had met. And his had dropped. She saw his face with that mean, uneasy, guilty look upon it. And then she saw herself again in her radiant confidence, as on the last time when she had been happy Anne—the Anne that was dead and, she hoped, safely buried—who had looked back at her smiling from her mirror on the morning before she had gone downstairs to find his letter by her breakfast plate. Among these living dead her father now appeared again, standing in his dressing gown as he had stood the other day to bid her farewell before her early start for Scotland. The bent, shabby figure, the forlorn white head, the high-bred old face with its lines of querulousness! The gaze he had fixed upon her that had had something akin to that of her forsworn lover when he had known his secret pettiness discovered—ashamed, conscious of

downfall, and yet brazen. "I hear that young Hanks very well spoken of, Anne. There, there, good-by, good-by. God guide you!"

"Why should I want to live?" said the girl to herself, and dipped a little lower into the waiting gulf.

It was perhaps that sense of falling that roused something that had been lulled within her: the instinct of vitality, the youth that was yet untried. "No, no, I do not wish to die. I will not die!" some wild thing cried within her. She sprang to her feet and stood quivering, rallying her forces together for the fight, the fight of one young life against the cruel forces of nature. It was always her habit to speak to herself, a way not uncommon with those of solitary minds. "Now I have only to move this way and that till I hear the waters again." Her energies were so centered in determination to save herself, that she only felt with vagueness the pain of stiffened limbs, the heavy drag of soddened skirts. She counted fifty paces and stopped; heard the distant chord of the falls; took fifty paces more and hearkened again. It was gone. She began to tremble. Then—at first she thought she was growing light-headed—there came a new sound, a sound of life, a sound of melody. A low whistling, so faint that it seemed a light fabric of fancy. But it grew louder; advanced into her consciousness, with a rhythm as to a marching foot. The melody took shape in words through her mind.

"O you'll take the high road,
And I'll take the low road,
And I'll be in Scotland before you."

She drew a breath. How exquisite! Oh, the old song, how exquisite it was!

"But I and my true love shall never meet again
On the bonny, bonny banks of Loch Lomond."

She heard a cry ring out in the dark, twice, circling like the scream of the curlew, and hardly knew it was her own "Help!"

"Who calls?" It was a man's voice, strong and warm, and colored, out of the horrible, clammy, unseen whiteness.

"Here—here! I am lost. Help!"

She was plunging headlong forward. The voice arrested her.

"Do not move. Stay where you are. Call again."

She obeyed instantly. It was as if a power greater than her panic had laid control over her will. Vigorous steps swished through the heather.

"Call again."

The voice was blessedly near. It was from sheer ecstasy that her throat failed her—a broken, strangled cry was all she could give. But the next moment, whether she saw, or merely felt the darkness of a solid form merge out of the universal shadow, she knew of a close presence before it took her. Staggering forward, she fell into groping, outstretched arms.

For a while she could feel nothing but the comfort of this human touch, this outside strength. Perhaps, if she had not wept, she might have fainted. Yet she only realized that she was crying when the voice said over her head:

"Eh, puir thing! Dinna greet, ye're safe."

Kindly hands supported without clasping her. Before her swimming brain was able to form again two consecutive thoughts, some consciousness of the spirit had recognized strength and goodness; some pulse of her heart had acclaimed perfect safety.

The gasping breaths slowed down; yet, a while, she clung with both hands to the rough, broad chest. The rescuer must be tall; for one of those lifted hands felt the measured beat of his heart. Somewhere—in a buttonhole no doubt—he must carry a spring of bog-myrtle, for the pungent fragrance clung about her nostrils, mixed with homely savors of peat smoke and the singular reek of homespun. There was also a subtle scent of tobacco—good tobacco, she thought.

She drew back, shifting her grasp to his arm. He stood with patience. She was the first to break the silence.

"Thank you, thank you," she said, with a little nervous laugh. The instinct of social breeding which enjoins the making light of all peril began to assert itself. "I have lost my way on the moor in this dreadful mist. I think that is all pretty evident——" she laughed again. "I am very lucky to have come across you. I hope you are not lost too!"

She was mentally feeling for those shreds of convention: the normal belittling of emotion, the artificial reticence, which are as a second nature.

"Nay—I'm not lost." He spoke gently, but she felt a distinct change from those first cordial tones.

The singularity of the phrase s
words gave the clew.

"My own hills," he said: they
the voice of a lover.

She fought against the spell tha
ing itself about her; as subtle and
the mist, yet—oh how different!
soothing, golden, like the beloved su
night of dreams.

"I am very lucky," she repeated. "
to Orchar Castle. I am staying the

This time there was no mistake;
ment of withdrawal in the arm to wh
She knew the withdrawal in his mind.
stood. Had she not had the sam
was not of his hills? Orchar Castle
was an outrage in the glen.

"Aye—I can take you back to O
are not so far from the road by whic
their cattle, and then it is but a mil

that she was chilled to the bone, exhausted. But for the sure help of that arm and the determination of a will outside her own, she never could have reached the track.

In spite of the relief from the clogging heather, the relief, too, of feeling a definite pathway beneath her feet instead of the nameless terror of the waste, she had not gone many paces further before she began to doubt if after all she could reach her goal. Whether she stumbled or whether he merely felt the drag of her failing steps, she could not tell.

"I am a fool," she heard him mutter.

And forthwith, he flung his arm about her, wheeled her round and drew in the opposite direction. She made no attempt to resist, did not even seek to question, but gave herself up, silently, with a sense of deep rest, to his support and guidance, as he half-led, half-carried her on. There was more than mere physical power. There was, once again, an upholding of her fainting spirit by a will as determined as it was beneficent. How good is a strong arm to lean upon! They had not gone far before he spoke:

"There is something of a shelter, here nigh. A stone hut which the herds use in lambing time. It will be best you should rest awhile, and get warm there. The mists will be lifting before long. And there will be a moon. Then you will have strength to walk."

He made these announcements as if he could count upon the moods of the night and upon hers with equal certainty.

"Oh, I'll be glad to be warm again," she murmured.

Afterwards, by daylight, she revisited the place where she had passed the strangest, the most marking hour of her life. A tiny hovel it was. Four walls, scarcely man high, dry-built of rough boulderstone, with a wattled roof and a single doorway, open to the winds. When in the darkness, she entered it, she was only made conscious of its narrow limits by the care with which he guided her in, between his extended arms, bidding her to stoop as they crossed the threshold.

"You can stand up now," he said. And, still holding her, led her against the farthest wall. "And now," he went on, and there came a certain cordial cheerfulness in his voice, "I will strike a light, and maybe I will find sticks to kindle a fire."

She felt curiously the constriction of the walls she could not see; yet the feeling was grateful, it was a sense of shelter. She breathed in the odd, peaty, mossy smell of the place. A kind of gayety sprang in her thoughts: she could understand how the rabbits might feel when, flying from danger, swift leaps brought them with palpitating hearts to the oozy depths of the burrows. A fire too! The wonderful prospect. And she would see the face of her rescuer. She would like to see his face. An exclamation interrupted her wandering thoughts:

"Misfortune! There's but a single match left! Tut —how did that happen?" He was talking more to himself than to her. He was vexed. "You have not, maybe, a box yourself? It is said the ladies at Orchar Castle smoke with the gentlemen."

"I never do," said Anne. "I wish now I did," she added ruefully.

"Aye, you will be wanting that fire—I am sorry. I am very sorry. I remember now, some dropped out as I was smoking my pipe—a while back at the loop of the glen. I never thought to pick them up. Aye, that's the way of it. It's the wee bit, lazy heedlessness that so often brings trouble into the world. You're sadly wanting that fire, I'm thinking. Pity!"

"Ah, never mind," said Anne gently. He had fallen back into the accent of the land, and she liked the sound of it. She did not really mind about the lack of warmth, she thought, half so much as the missing of a sight of his face. "Since you have one match——" she went on tentatively.

"Aye—what will I do with it? Shall I strike it now? There mun be a faggot in the corner. With a handful of the dry bracken—oh, aye, I can but try."

She knew that, as he spoke, he was unwinding his plaid, carefully, lest an unguarded movement should reach her. She heard him shuffle about the narrow space, heard the crackle of sticks under his hand, and then, once again the ejaculation of concern.

"The damp has got into the bracken. I doubt I'll no get a bit of it to kindle. Think now," he went on, and she fancied a smile in his voice, "and we with but one match between us. Shall I not keep it? You might want a glint later on."

"No, no!" she cried. "Light it now."

She heard the breaking of the twigs, the whisper of bracken he was now dragging forth in the dark; then

the sharp splutter of the match. She strained her gaze towards the leap of the tiny flame: she might have so brief a time wherein to see what it was going to show her. And she wanted to see—wanted, out of all reason.

A crouching figure, with bent head. A section of a narrow shaft of blackened stones. Two lean hands—one lifting a wisp of bracken over the match held by the other. At first she could not distinguish the face: it was half-averted. He was altogether concentrated upon his task. She had a scarce formed sensation of pique that the curiosity should not be mutual. He did not even cast a glance in her direction. The strands of bracken flared minutely and went out; flared again, and went out. He stretched his hand for another piece, and she caught a momentary glimpse of his profile. A strong, grave, clear-cut face. The face of a man still young, but with nothing of boyhood left. A stern face, she thought, with overhanging brow and a jut of the underlip that was almost hard. Of the eye she could distinguish nothing but the long, narrow setting in the deep shadow.

Then the picture was lost to her: she could only see the busy hand, the futile jets of fire that rose and fell, and the small, single steady flame of the match drawing to its end.

She hung on that flickering illumination, so curiously yellow through the misty gloom, holding her breath. As the flame dwindled to his finger tips, she felt a frantic impulse to call out to him, to make him look up at her before it should go out and yield them again to the abominable night. It was as if he had heard the call.

He straightened himself and turned upon her. Ah, she had known he was tall beyond the common of men.

He held the tiny little light a little below the level of his eyes—and they looked at each other one second. Then the match went out. There was a short span of silence; it seemed long, and full of strange moment.

"My grief! Would I had been able to light a fire for you, for indeed I believe you need it, sore!"

She lifted her hands and pressed her temples. She seemed still to feel his eyes upon her—luminous eyes, in such deep setting. They had fixed her in an odd way, as if looking through her, into her soul.

"I am coming a step nearer to you," he went on. "Give me your hand. There is peat in the corner. If you wrap yourself in my plaid, you can rest and grow warm. Nay, you must let me care for you."

He found her hand, folded the big plaid about her, drew her to the rough seat, settling the turves like an armchair, placing some under her feet. His touch was kind, direct, skillful—impersonal.

"You are good," she said, as he drew back; and she was surprised at herself for the phrase and the meaning she gave to it.

"Did I not tell you," said he, "this is where the herds bring in the lambs that else would perish in the storm? I suppose I have the shepherd's way. Now I am sitting down by that hearth I could not kindle for you. A cold hearth is a cruel thing. But the mist is lighter already, and here is a grand opportunity for patience."

"Oh," she said, "patience is, like your cold hearth, an empty substitute for action."

"Nay," said he, "it is a noble virtue. Patience and his fellow, Endurance, are the ribs of the soul."

She refused to follow the thought. She would not agree with him.

"Patience, endurance? A donkey has both!"

He answered her gravely:

"Aye, you say true. The very beasts shame us outright in many a way. Few of us have the loyalty of the dog, nor his faithfulness to the death; nor the single heart of him that loves his master, not for his soft hands, not for his rich clothes, not for beauty, not for gain in any way, but will follow him starving, and die for him."

"What is best in man—is the dog!"

She had had the impulse to say the old catch word in French, as a test; but shame took her on the edge of speech for what seemed a meanness. She blurted the phrase, and was further ashamed of its triteness. There was a pause. Then, as if he had been pondering her words, he said slowly:

"They have flippant minds, yon French. Yet it is true—a man may be tempted to think more of his hound than of his fellow man. And that is wrong. 'Tis wrong to the core of it, for we must never forget the immortal soul, and the price."

A shiver ran through her. She felt as if, paddling in shallow waters, she had been flung suddenly out of her depth. It was her turn to be silent, because she did not know how to navigate her mind in such depths. He took up the talk in lighter tones.

"Have you ever read the writings of a fellow by name

Maeterlinck? I mind me of a strange, pretty stage-play, the Blue Bird. Aye, you have heard of it. Do you mind how the dog calls his master 'My little god'? That's a bit that brings the tears to the eyes and the smile to the lips. Ah—the poor, dumb things that have no better God than such as we—and no heaven but what we can make here for them. There's little mercy (we have Scripture warrant for that) in the heart that has no mercy for the beast."

The unknown's voice, from the beginning, had had a singular effect upon Anne. It was deep, strong, harmonious; and she had never heard accents that went with the thoughts as this man's did. It was like some perfect instrument enthralled to the musician. She heard now the echo of the inexplicable agonies of innocent creatures. Tears sprang and she cried out:

"Oh, the horrible cruelty of the world! Does it not make one wonder if there can be a God at all?"

In the darkness there was a rustle, as if, startled, he had sat up straight.

"Is that the way with you? You poor soul!"

She knew he must be leaning forward, for the voice was nearer. It had so much compassion that, oddly, it stirred in her an infinite compassion for herself.

"I'm all lost," she cried. "I don't know what I think. Life is horrible. If I begin to think at all, it does not seem to me that anyone can want to go on living. And yet, if one does not think, one might as well be a mouse, or a bird—a thing of blind instinct, spinning out a feeble destiny. When I walked off, today, away from them all, I was so sick of life—the kind of life I lead: chatter,

When I became lost in the mist, I thou
matter. I had just as soon die. And th
voice broke; she was so sorry for hers
inconclusive self! "I got into a terror.
fight for my life, such as it is. Oh, what
what are we—is there no answer to th

Through her passionate speech, sh
breathing as if he were at grips with h
with a physical burden.

"Of whom do you seek answer—or of

She would not reply. "Oh, it is som
she thought impatiently, "ready to set
verse upon the new striving of a more tl
—as one might fling an old tombstone
sapling. An old tombstone with its text
hourglass, and their lost significance!"
pared for his next words:

"When you pray—if you pray——"
She interrupted sharply:

"Pray? No."

without. She had no welcome for it; neither had she a welcome for his announcement.

"The mist is on the move. Maybe, in ten minutes, you——"

Once more she interrupted.

"Pray? I did once. Now, I had as soon pray to nature, to the mist itself. I would as soon believe it might hear me."

It vexed her that he should speak in an everyday, cheerful tone; that he should put the cry of her distressed mind aside as words of folly, unworthy of attention. His big outline could dimly be seen against the pale screen outside, as he sat down in the doorless entrance.

"You prayed; and asked for something. Would it have been for your happiness if it had been granted?"

The words struck home. Again she would not answer; but a voice within her cried: "It is true! It would have meant misery!"

"If you ask the Father for bread—will He reach you a stone?"

Irritably she exclaimed:

"I did ask for bread! Oh, it is all a quibble. Why should it turn to stone?"

"Ah," said he, "we come ever round to first causes, free-will and responsibility. You say you do not pray now; that you would as soon pray to the blind forces of nature as to your God. You speak nonsense—everyone prays, whether he know it or not. Could one such as you pass a single day without hourly, nay, perpetual prayer, you would no longer be a human,

reasonable being but a monster. When I say prayer, I do not mean a recital of words, but those deeds, those thoughts which are recognition of God and of the divine essence within ourselves. You, now, I dare swear, would not, from your own testimony of yourself, do a base thing for profit, or an evil thing for bliss; for——"

Anne laughed scornfully.

"I owe that to myself."

"But why should you owe it to yourself? If you are nothing more than the mouse, and the bird, the creature of mere instincts, you owe nothing to yourself but to follow instinct. Ah, nay, nay, poor soul, you owe it to Him who made you, to choose right instead of wrong —since He gave you the power to discern."

She was abashed; yet with a sense of impending event. That other self which had always stood apart, and grieved, and wondered; which had been shut up in some dark room, beating at the walls, wailing at the darkness, began to stretch its wings like an imprisoned bird. Without, there must be life, light and free spaces, could they only be reached. She remembered the revolt in which she had turned from the thought of annihilation. The divine essence within her—that was what he meant, her soul. It had already given testimony of the truth of his words; if she had a soul there must be a God.

He went on, once more with that uncanny way of answering the unspoken:

"Aye, it is that gives us dignity—to owe it to ourselves. It is a grand, an awful thing to have a soul, and to have the keeping of it. There lies the pivot of our

being—the higher the honor, the greater the responsibility. That's the law of the world, as well you know. Eh, woman, whoever you be, you cannot escape the mighty charge. And you have got to keep that soul, that ransomed soul, fit for the eyes of the All-seeing. But you cannot do that without His help—without asking for His help." In the growing, pallid light she saw, by the movement of the shadowy outline, that he had turned to look in upon her in the dark corner, and she felt the piercing gaze she could not see. "I will say more. There can be no goodness outside the source of goodness; no purity that is not fed from the Infinite Perfection; no love, no love in all the world worth the name, that does not spring from the very Heart of Love—all given to us through Christ our Lord!"

Listening to this man, it was as if the walls of her prison had become pierced with light, giving her a faint but exquisite vision of landscape bathed in a peace and a joy undreamed. She looked, not upon her soul, but on his; and beheld it contemplating and reflecting—as some still tarn of his own hill reflects arches of heaven, purity, goodness, love. No wonder he should seem so strong and so serene.

CHAPTER IV

EH, but I was marvelously guided tonight! I'm thinking it is just another strayed lamb that has been brought into the fold."

He laughed as he spoke. The gentleness of the sound brought a grip to her throat, a rush of tears to her eyes.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "when I heard you whistling the 'Bonny Banks,' I thought in all the world there never had been such a melody."

There was a moment's silence. Then he began to whistle it again, softly, extraordinarily sweet and true. And then, half aloud he chanted the burden:

"You'll take the high road,
And I'll take the low road,
And I'll be in Scotland before you,
But I and my true love will never meet again."

"Oh, hush!" she cried, "I cannot bear it!"

"Aye, it takes you by the heart—as many an old song. The grief of it—the human grief and the immortal spirit. Ye ken it is the farewell of the Jacobite to his sweetheart. He was to be hangit, yon, for loyalty. And she to gang, her heart broken, way back hame. Ah, but mark the certainty of it. 'I'll be in Scotland before you.' The grand flight of the freed

soul! And then the fall back to the human, puir laddie, with the cry of his youth. 'But I and my true love will never meet again, on the bonny, bonny banks of Loch Lomond.' The bonny braes,—it is a touch that! The hills of hame, it takes one in the marrow."

He dropped the Scottish homely speech. "Yes, it is a splendid fortune, a grand way to die," he cried, "to give life and youth, in its joy and its glory, for the cause you hold right!"

The old Joscelyns who, Anne had thought, had risen up in her to forbid the degradation of a Hanks alliance, clamored in her blood, this time acclaiming, ratifying. Here, at last, was a voice that woke echoes in her soul. Here seemed to be something she had waited for, waited for so long as to have lost belief. Confused thoughts, long dormant in her, circled in her brain. She could not give them form, much less speech. She had impulsively flung out her hands, but quickly let them fall again on her lap. Better that no human touch should pass between them, nor even glance of eye; that the very emotion written upon each other's face should remain hidden. They were soul to soul, yes, she could no more doubt the existence of this man's soul than that her own was responsive to it.

She heard him once again take up the ancient lilt. But he broke it off abrupty; and the pallid opening was blocked as he rose.

"It will be safe to venture now."

She had an indescribable sinking of the spirit; and, with it, an unreasoned spring of resentment. This intercourse of all that was most intimate and sacred,

shepherding guidance: the light of the m
into the mists. Pale, ghostly, wide diffu
strong enough to enable them to see ea
any distinctness; but his figure showe
her. The stone hut loomed gray, and
gaped like a black mouth. Black, too, th
dimly glistening here and there, on eith
sheep track that stretched and became
world's pallor.

"Why, here's luck," he said, simply, "
road. It will not seem long to you, n
doubt you must be sore fatigued. Take
will grow a bit clearer yet, presently,
though it is not like to shift altogether.
a bonny place lonesome as it seems no
August, the heather spread—no royal
show a nobler purple. Aye, not Solom
glory and the bees humming over it, the
a-shimmer. And the shades of the woo
and that of the hills, blue—blue as indi
far away mountains blue. Oh, I tell

"I trust," said Anne, with a sudden tartness that surprised even herself, "that you do not include the towers of Orchar Castle in the picture."

He gave a short note of laughter.

"Nay," said he, "I never come within sight of Orchar Castle, if I can help it. I have no traffic with yon folk—have a care now, this is a rough bit."

"I suppose," she said, hanging on his arm, and plodding on, only aware in some sub-conscious way, of her stiffness and fatigue, so full was her mind of turmoil, "I suppose you think I am just one of that horrible lot."

"No," he answered, "I am just thinking you are a lonely soul. Ah, I am a lonely soul myself, but, thank God! the fog has not come down upon me—I am thinking," he went on, and she caught the smile in his tone, "that you are something like my bonny moors, this moment. But there will be, sure, a good time anon, when the sun will warm you through and the blue of the sky will look on you—and you will find yourself clothed in bloom and color, if not in this life—hereafter."

She barely resisted an impulse to wrench her hand from his arm.

"That gars you shy?" he said in his amused voice.

"Oh, it is so trite, so meaningless! The old nursery morality! It is just a kind of patter, repeated from generation to generation. Who believes in it now?"

"Well, I rather think you do—by your own showing, since you flew from the house of Dives yonder, because everyone there was so taken up with the earthly

life that the life to come was altogether forgotten."

He stopped and faced her. She tried, frantically, to see his countenance. But the white glimmer was too mystifying: she could only catch the glint of his eyes, under the darkness of their penthouse brows.

"You and I," said he, "have strangely met. And it is not for nothing that our paths have crossed. It is not in the nature of things that, when we part, in a few minutes more, we shall ever meet again. Aye, we are ships that pass in the night and call to each other in passing. But we were not brought together by a toss of blind chance, no more in the world of the spirit than in that of matter. I was going along in the dark myself; worse than the dark, for the mist is an evil and confusing visitation. Yet, though I could neither see nor grope, I knew my way. Perhaps I could ill explain to you, how, yet I knew my way. I knew it unerringly. All I could give you was the grasp of a hand. And when I wanted to light up, my grief, I had but one little match. It set the shadows dancing a moment, and went out. Aye, that is not a bad symbol of all my human intellect can do for you. I can but hold up my single faint light."

"Oh, you have set my shadows dancing," she said, tremulously.

They still stood, and she, futilely trying to pierce the baffling milky whiteness, cried, with petulance,

"Oh, why did you not keep that match! Now would have been the time to strike it."

Either deliberately, or unintentionally, he took up her lament in the symbolic sense.

"Nay, then, I'll not call it a match, which burns and is gone, but a flint with the fire hid in it—and I'll even strike it again, for the comfort a sight of its kindling may give you. Hech, but I've thought round it, and above and beneath it, many an hour, many a fruitless hour, myself. And I've had my own struggles, such as every thinking man must go through. Take it from our mortal outlook, life is one series of swinging paradoxes. The deepest pit of misery is in the lap of pleasure. He that most seeks his ease falls ever shorter of content. The only hint of the infinite in happiness vouchsafed to us lies in renunciation. It is the saint that has the ecstasy. Maybe you have come across the writings of your strange scatterbrain genius Chesterton. Aye, 'tis an odd freakish mind, but it casts a grand beam, awhiles, on a dark world. 'The only two parties in human affairs that count,' says he, 'is the one who sees life black against white and the one who sees it white against black. The party,' he says, 'which macerates and blackens itself with sacrifice because the background is full of the blaze of an universal mercy, and the party which crowns itself with flowers and lights itself with bridal torches because it stands against a black contour of incalculable night——' "

"That's the party I belong to," said Anne bitterly.

"I was thinking as much," he replied with a grave compassion. And after a little pause took up the theme once more. "In fine, it is all summed up in the one mighty paradox: He that loses his life shall save it. And that is why the Greeks, who loved beauty, held that the only image of perfect beauty on the

earth, is the image of the youth fallen in battle. They were often near the truth, yon Greeks, though they did not know the true meaning of their own conclusions. There is but one answer to the many stranded riddle—it is the eternal warfare—the spirit against the flesh. What you take from the flesh you give to the spirit. What you give to the flesh is to corruption, what you give to the spirit is to eternity. There is a meaning in life, then. Life—'exultations, agonies, and love, and man's unconquerable mind.' Ah, but I would alter the last word: it is man's unconquerable soul, the poet should have said."

A long pause fell between them.

"Thank you," said Anne at length, and drew a slow breath.

"Take my arm again," he said. "We had better be moving."

And they went on, in silence. She felt as if she must cling to that arm, if there were to be any hope for her. She wanted to cry out against his attitude; against this pronouncement that they were but ships in the night, on the great waste; that their meeting was to be a mere cry and reply in the wilderness. She sought for words in which to plan fresh encounters, further intercourse. She wanted to penetrate that curious, that mysterious personality; to know who he was, who spoke now like a son of the soil, now like the scholar; whence he came; where she could find him—above all this last, so that a written word at least would reach him. But his detachment raised a barrier between

them, close though they walked together, close though their thoughts had met. And she could not bring herself to the advance which could break it down. His desire was that they should part as they had met, unknown. She could not, without violating every instinct, break it down. But she went as far as her pride would allow—with a few tentative questions:

"I fear you will be home very late. I hope no one will be anxious for you."

He answered her, nay, that they knew his way. Many a time he had spent the night on the hills.

She ventured again. It was no night, she said, for anyone to remain out. She trusted he would not have very far to go. To this he said briefly, nay, again.

He had spoken so freely to her in the shepherd's hut that this want of communicativeness now struck her as something strangely determined. After what seemed a long time, filled only by the trudge of their feet in the blanketing unfriendly stillness of the night, she tried a third time.

"You live in the hills, I suppose."

"Aye."

He appeared now to speak with an effort, as if bringing his mind away from thoughts more absorbing than her personality could arouse. Twice he had compared her to a lost lamb picked up by the shepherd —she was nothing more to him, she said bitterly to herself, and the lament of her troubled heart was but the distressed bleat of a forlorn unreasoning creature, yet he had said great things to her, only a little while ago. He had given her a sight of his soul and its inner-

most aspirations; had let her see his strong flight, his poise on strong wings.

All at once the great multiple chant of the waters smote her ear again:

"How strange," she cried, "I hear the falls!—so loud, they seem quite close: and, only a second ago, there was not a whisper."

"That is the way of it," he answered, "when you get into the trough of the moor. Yes, it is strange how the sound will be lost and found again, in the hills."

"Oh, I am glad to hear it once more!" she said. "I tried to guide myself by it, and then I'd lose it. It was horrible; the stillness of death—the loneliness—oh, the loneliness!" she went on, hardly thinking where her words were leading her. "I am so lonely."

He slackened his pace and half turned to her. And she heard anxiety in his voice as he said:

"Keep up your heart, now. There is not so far to go. Eh, but you're sore weary. Take a better grip of my arm. Lean on me. I will stand by you, never fear. I'll no gang so fast."

Then he took up the thread of her previous phrase, and she knew he was trying to divert her mind.

"Aye, the sound of the water, it was company for you. The creature, water. It is one of the grand gifts of God. Darkness was on the face of the deep and the spirit of God moved over the waters!" He stood still. "But, look yonder," he said, exchanging his musing tones for those of alertness, "do you not see lights? Aye—and hear shouts? I'm thinking search parties are out for you. Aye, that will be it. Lanterns, and—

watch that—those will be electric torches shooting such white lights. Hanks it'll be sure enough."

Anne saw and heard. The rescue party. An overwhelming desire seized her—she knew it was madness, and it passed as swiftly as it came—to fling herself on this man's breast, her real rescuer; to clasp him, clutch him, implore him to hold her and never let her go. It left her shaken. The bitterness of the old life, the inevitable life, was almost a tangible taste on her palate.

"How would it be," he suggested, "if you were to sit till they come up?"

"No, no!" she cried. She still had his arm to cling to. She clung, desperately.

"They have a car out for you. You can hear the throb, and there comes the light of it on the road. That was a good thought, of Hanks."

He sent a shout into the night, a loud winged cry. It fell upon Anne's heart like a blow. The thudding labor of a slow driven motor on a bad and steep road, and the roar of the Warroch falls, now in close proximity, filled her senses with confusion. The gathering revolt against the prospect of Sidney Hanks hurrying towards her through the white murk; of Orchar Castle and all its inmates; of a return to the old life and to the walls of the prison-house, swamped her soul in a tide of misery. She clutched the strong kind arm, as a drowning creature might clutch. And it was with an indescribable sinking of the heart that she felt him gently but relentlessly disengage himself.

"Stay here," he ordered. He took two strides away from her, and once more sent forth his wild call.

It was answered. The motor stopped. Its twin great rays swung round and fell on the heather a few yards short of where she stood. She saw that it was in a lower road towards which their track dipped. The next moment a kilted figure—one of the gillies of Lord Weyford's ultra Scottish establishment—darted up to her waving a lantern. As he tossed it towards her face, she turned instinctively to steal, by its light, a glimpse of the companion of so singular an hour. But she searched in vain.

And now both strange and familiar faces were closing in about her.—Lord Weyford's, pompous, hook-nosed, rather reprobatory, out of an upturned fur-collar under a plush Homburg hat. The "honorable Sidney" with a nervous grin, looking at her beneath the peak of his tweed cap—so hopelessly the vulgarian in contrast with the alert faces of the Highland lads.

Anne could never remember what was said to her, and what she said, beyond that answer to her involuntary cry: "Where is he?" when the gillie who had first approached, raised his lantern and peered into the darkness behind her.

"He's gone, me leddy—gin you mean him who called? He was off and awa like a deer."

It was not till she was seated in the luxurious recess of the car, with Sidney Hanks opposite to her, and her host's portly presence overflowing upon her in his bulging furs, that she became aware he was offering her brandy. The smell of it added a physical weakness to the laden disappointment that had fallen upon her spirit. She pushed the gold flask away and turned

her head petulantly from the pitiless white glare of the electric bulb in the roof of the car.

"Ugh!—No, I couldn't!"

"You do look bad, what?—'Pon my word you ought to have some, you know," urged Sidney. His bony knees were pressing upon her from the opposite seat.

"Mistake, I say. Quite a mistake!" Lord Weyford pronounced. "Only thing for a chill, Miss Joscelyn. It's a confounded night—it's been a confounded day—'orrible fog. 'Orrible wet fog. Chills you to the marrow. Well, if you won't, I will." And she heard the gulps. Both windows were closed. Then he chuckled with returning good humor: "A fine scare you've given us all, young lady. We thought you had fallen in the lake. I had given orders to my fellows," said Lord Weyford, "to drag it tomorrow."

CHAPTER V

POOR little Nan does look as if her steam bath had not agreed with her. A cold steam bath, ugh!"

And Miss Bradles spluttered off into laughter. Anne lifted heavy eyelids and looked across at her, with a faint smile. Yesterday—was it only yesterday? it seemed a cycle away in time—she had felt a sudden stir of anger at Miss Bradles' unencouraged familiarity. "Poor little Nan," was a nearer stage in patronizing intimacy which only a Cherry Bradles could have devised. But what did it matter?

"Our Anne has been at the gates of Death," shuddered Lady Brooksbury. She gazed at the girl; to her special morbid fancy Anne had never looked half so beautiful as now in her paleness and languor. "What agonies you must have endured, darling!"

"Agony?—Nonsense!" pronounced Lord Weyford. "It was a bit awkward for us, knowing the lake so 'andy; but I'll take my oath Miss Joscelyn's too sensible a girl not to know that, when she didn't return, I'd have a hundred men out on the moor after her."

Lord Weyford unconcernedly dropped his h's. Quite vainly had his fashionable daughter tried to cure him. He would explain to her, with the utmost good humor, and indeed a shrewd knowledge of the society she aspired to: "Don't you worry your little 'ead, nobody'll

mind my aitches so long as £. s. d. remains O. K." And Guinevere had given up all attempt at parental reformation, when she found that her father was so charmed with his joke and the applause it evoked that he scarce could repeat it too often.

"Never mind, Guinie, my pet," Lady Weyford remarked when her daughter lamented, with hot tears, this last form of indiscretion. "Your father's a little plain, now and again; but he's solid. And, after all, it is you and Sidney people look to. And, as I was saying to Auntie Cherry only last night, I defy anyone to show a more aristocratic pair."

The Weyfords were very fond of each other; and if the family were members of a mutual admiration society, their encomiums were perfectly genuine. Cherry Bradles, herald to the court of Hanks, now took up her brother-in-law's theme on her trumpet, with variations and flourishes.

"I never did admire you so much, Warren, as I did last night. And that's saying a good deal," she declared. "There you were, just home from your deer stalk——"

"To be precise—in my 'ot bath," smiled the plutocrat.

"——when Sidney came in like a madman. You were like a madman, Sid. He was, Nannikins, like a madman! 'I have lost Miss Joscelyn on the moor,' he cried. I am ashamed to say I laughed. I was so far from understanding. 'How careless of you!' I said. 'Oh, don't laugh, Aunt Cherry,' he said, poor boy!

'There's the damnedest mist you ever saw.'—Damnedest was your word, Sid."

Here the whole Hanks family, including even the aspiring Guinevere, laughed heartily. And Sidney shot a conscious glance at Anne, to see whether she duly appreciated what a witty fellow he could be, even in the hour of stress.

"And there was my poor darling Carrie calling out 'the lake, the lake,' in dreadful hysterics. You know you were, Carrie dear. Carrie has such a heart," said Miss Bradles, with a moistening gaze upon the circle; "and Lady Brooksbury in a swoon; and the poor duchess having to be kept up with champagne; and our naughty little Puss,—Pen here,—setting the Autopleyel going; and the big bell in the stables ringing as if for a fire——"

Here Miss Bradles sputtered with mirth. She was, for the moment, the only speaker of the circle and enjoying herself immensely. "And down comes Warren into the turmoil.—I have always," asserted the sister-in-law enthusiastically, "revered Warren's force of personality, but I never realized what power a business intellect can have, until I saw his grasp of the situation." Lord Weyford chuckled and turned the immense cigar within his lips.

"It was like a general giving his orders," pursued the public orator. Lord Weyford removed the Havana.

"I hope, Cherry," he said facetiously, "that you don't think it a compliment to compare my brains to those of a British general."

Cherry was the first to pay this sally the tribute

it deserved, declaring that there was nobody like Warren for dry humor.

They were a very merry party that afternoon, in Lady Weyford's boudoir. Miss Bradles, with an occasional dash of that mock humility which emphasizes a familiarity with grandeur, had been known to refer to this apartment as a "snug little room." Only in contrast to the proportions of the reception *salons* downstairs could it be called small. It was hung round with rose Dubarry *gobelins*, crowded with Louis XV furniture (regilded to Lord Weyford's taste); the deepest rose of the tapestry was repeated in unsparing brilliance in a sea of pile carpet, and from the gold and ivory telephone on Lady Weyford's *vernis Martin* writing-table, to the rose-quartz and enamel door handles, every detail was an almost indecent advertisement of wealth.

It was, as Lady Weyford declared, only on very special occasions that she admitted the gentlemen to tea in this, her sanctum, since his lordship and his cigar were to be reckoned as inseparable—and there is nothing so tiresome as velvet for catching the smell. But this was indeed a special occasion: Anne's first appearance downstairs after the events of the previous night.

Anyone who had cared to notice the attitude of the Hanks family that afternoon might have been aware of a marked difference in their demeanor towards the young lady. Hitherto they had been, as Lady Brooksbury complained, apparently oblivious of the distinction which her fastidious presence conferred upon Orchar Castle. Now, not only was she the center of their

admiring eyes, but there was something possessive about the manner in which they encircled her and peculiar meaning in their interchange of becks and nods and wreathèd smiles.

Had Anne not been so tired, so aloof in every thought, she could not but have perceived the ominous fashion in which Sidney Hanks was thrust forward to minister to her. She might perhaps have remarked also how Penelope, with a small, sullen, flushed countenance, fixed her from a neglected corner, as if she were heartily wishing her at the bottom of the 'andy loch.

"I've only one regret," said the hostess, in her fat, good-humored voice, "and that is that Weyford forgot to take the little case of refreshment I had prepared to go with the car.—The *foie-gras* rolls, and the flask of Bananine."

"Yes, indeed, wasn't it like Carrie!—ever thinking of others." Thus Miss Bradles "'Call the housekeeper,' she cried, on the spot, while Julia and I—Julia's the head lady's maid—were unlacing her corset. She would give the order herself between the spasms."

"But I had a drop of stuff for her, worth forty liqueurs," averred the Crœsus. "That Cognac of mine —ran me thirty guineas a dozen, at the sale of his late Majesty's cellar."

"The pater cheered his own heart anyhow," growled Sidney, in his humorous way.

He was sitting on a stool, as close as he dared to Anne's feet. The circle applauded again, most of the guests voted him inwardly, "the limit in bounders;"

but it saved a deal of trouble to let themselves be amused.

"I was just out of my 'ot bath——" protested Lord Weyford.

"But my regret is," interpolated the sinuous voice of Mrs. Markham, "that Mr. Hanks should have lost dear Anne on the moors. It would have been so romantic—wouldn't it, dear Miss Bradles?—if he had been the real rescuer, instead of the unknown—what kind of man was it, Anne? We've heard so little about it. We only just know that some creature opportunely found you and guided you to the right road. Do describe him."

Anne let a grave glance fall upon the speaker's countenance, which was quivering with a grin of elfish malice.

"I can't," she answered.

"What—indescribable?"

"I did not see him."

"What?" in a higher key, with a little ripple of laughter.

For a moment the gaze of the two young women met; and Anne knew that, by some mischievous clairvoyance, Lydia Markham divined how distasteful were these questions to her; and that, therefore, she was bent on the inquisition.

"You're awfully clever and all that, Mrs. Markham," remarked Sidney—he was on easy, sparring terms with the lady—"but even you could hardly see an inch before your nose in a white mist, at night, I don't think."

"Oh, poor Anne!" tittered Mrs. Markham. "How

did you manage? How horrid for you! Did you have to grab at each other in the dark? Look at Anne, isn't she shut up? What's the mystery, darling? Come, do tell! What sort of a creature was it—a gillie, a shepherd?"

"I don't know."

"Oh, nonsense! You must have had some talk together. Did he talk like a shepherd, or—happy thought! I believe there is a romance lurking somewhere, after all—was it a gentleman?"

"I don't know," said Anne. Then she raised herself from her languid attitude; and, straightening her slenderness, flung a look of contemptuous anger upon her interlocutor. Anne's eyes were of a dark, dreaming blue; but when she was angry, they lightened and shot fire. "I don't know what you mean by a gentleman."

Once more Lord Weyford took the cigar from between his lips.

"Who's to say what's a gentleman? I say a man who makes his own pile and a bit over, and stands to his country 'andsome, and does his duty to high and low, I say that man's as good a gentleman as any who walks. As to whether Miss Joscelyn met with a gentleman last night or not, that's a matter of opinion, as she says herself. Personally he doesn't come up to my standard——"

Anne looked round with a flickering color. All eyes were now turned with curiosity upon Lord Weyford.

"Why, hullo, pater," exclaimed his son and heir, "you don't mean to say——"

"I do mean to say, my boy," interrupted Lord Wey-

ford. "Your auntie was good enough to remark just now how she thought me a wonder at tackling a situation. Tell you what it is: among other things I keep my eye on the detail. I took the trouble to ask the gillies if any of them had marked the—the gentleman that ran off in such a hurry when they came near. And one of them said: 'I did, my lord, 'twas Minniglen himsel', or his double or the devil.'—That's what he said."

"Minniglen!" echoed the family in divers tones of disapproval. Then Miss Bradles expounded:

"Young McClurg of Minniglen. A neighbor. He has got a tumbledown old place, adjoining Glenorchar estates. We don't really know him," she added.

"McClurg, was it?" repeated Sidney, with a dropping jaw.

"Yes, that fellow," said his father; and his tone was one of such coarse disparagement that Anne shuddered as if he had spat.

"Was it McClurg?" questioned Mrs. Markham, boringly fixing her.

"I don't know," said Anne.

"Didn't you ask his name?"

"No."

"Didn't he ask yours?"

"No."

"Oh, Anne, how quaint you are! How could you say you did not know whether McClurg of Minniglen was a gentleman or not?"

Once again Sidney chimed in, impervious after the Hanks' fashion, to the veiled slight upon his father.

"You're awfully on the spot, as a rule, Mrs. Markham, what? But you don't happen to know McClurg, do you?—Ah, I thought you didn't. Well, he's the queerest kind of cussed fellow anybody ever met. Dresses like a gillie; lives like a gillie, always on the hills."

"He's a very odd person really." In Miss Bradles's laugh there was acidity. "We tried to be kind to him, when we came here. Dear Carrie is always so hospitable. Her one idea is to please people. I think everyone knows what she has made of the neighborhood. She forgets nobody. Nobody. Even the meenister's daughters are on her dance list. I am sure," tittered Miss Bradles, "young McClurg can't think he has been asked here for any other reason than one of sheer good nature. He's not the kind of youth that's an ornament to a party, is he, Guinie? Poor Guinie had to dance with him at the dear Bruce-McLeod's ball, last year; and she won't forget it in a hurry!"

"I don't see why I should remember it," retorted Guinevere, a sullen twist on her lips, "considering he never uttered a word the whole time."

"And if he had uttered," amended her aunt, in a rocket of splutters, "it would have been in broad Scots —would it not, Sid?"

"Don't know," said the honorable Sidney. "Never spoke to the fellow, myself, and don't want to."

The duchess, who had been heavily engaged on tea—*petits pains fourrés* and *babas au rhum*, which she found palatable—now heaved a deep sigh and plunged into the conversation.

"Dear me, I quite forgot that Minniglen was in this part of the world. Dear me, I used to stay there, as a girl, in the old man's time. Delightful man, everyone adored him. King Edward swore by him. Perfect specimen of the old school. Of course," said the duchess, musingly, "dreadful rip. Dreadful. Spent three fortunes. Ran away with the wives of both his neighbors. His daughter-in-law, mother of the present man, kind of cousin of mine. What's he grown up like? Nice little boy——"

Her apparent oblivion of the recent conversation was not due to what is popularly known as airs, but to a sluggishness of mind which made her prefer to have the subject under discussion repeated to her, rather than give herself the trouble of focusing her thoughts. Lord Weyford, however, this time took umbrage.

"You've heard what I think of the young fellah, duchess," he remarked. "He's a cantankerous, impudent, stuck-up jackanapes. He doesn't know his place. What's the old song, Sidney? ' 'E dunno where 'e are.' That's what it is. Thinks himself something because he's at the long end of a beggarly race. 'Pon my soul, that's what it comes to," repeated Lord Weyford, brought back to good humor by the sound of his own logic. "Won't have anything to do with us, if you please. No use your making faces at me, Guinie, my girl. I don't think anything the less of myself because a beggarly laird on his bit of land tries to turn up his nose at us. Stupid fool of a fellah he is, too! There's the marquis now, he makes no bones about selling his bare hills to me. He knows when he's on a good

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thing. And, if it suits me to give a fancy price for so many miles of hill, barren hills, without as much as two inches of soil over the rock—what is called a deer forest, duchess—well, I say, if I want a deer forest for my boy who's to come after me, I can afford to pay for the whole 'umbug of family pride, love of the soil. All that sentimental slush. I do pay for it. As I say, it suits the marquis, and it suits me. And we shake hands and are the best of friends. Bless me, though, if that cock-a-hoop laddie isn't all aflame at the mere offer. Such a letter he wrote me."

"Wouldn't he sell then?" said Lady Brooksbury, in her deep voice. "Oh, I do sympathize. I can't help it, Lord Weyford. He could not barter his beautiful birthright for a mess of pottage."

"Mess of fiddlesticks!" The millionaire's bald head grew pink. His accents resumed their irate ring. "Excuse me, Lady Brooksbury, but your own 'usband has a deal more sense than that. He's a man, now, that can face the new conditions of life. He's jolly glad to realize the capital that brings a man no dividends. I think a pretty fat cheque went out of my pocket into his at the Brooksbury 'Ouse sale. If you look about you, next time you happen to be in the hall——"

He broke off dramatically, and Lady Brooksbury filled in the pause with a musical moan. Cherry threw herself in the breach.

"I am sure," she cried, "dear Lady Brooksbury is far too poetical to look upon life as you do, Warren—to look at things from the practical point of view, you know. But facts are facts. I am sure the duchess

herself will forgive me if I say: it is high time for our English Society to be renewed with fresh blood, and aristocracy to give place to plutocracy."

"Oh, dear!" said the duchess. She did not understand; and she did not care to follow any argument with accuracy. But she would make a lurch at a topic, and sometimes hit it. She did hit, and with a resounding smack in this instance. "If you mean that our girls are right to marry rich young men, I quite agree with you. I only wish Pen would marry a millionaire, or the son of one, with all my heart!—Didn't you say there would be bridge after tea, Lady Weyford?"

This remark induced a move. The bridge tables were laid out, Lord Weyford announced, in the oak parlor. And further he condescendingly opined that he did not mind taking a hand himself. The two or three elderly financiers, the young government minister, and the distinguished diplomat who had been holding too close converse in a corner of the room to pay attention to the group round the fireplace, separated and drifted away. Lady Pen, with a whoop, demanded volunteers for the tango practice in the hall. And, presently, Anne became aware, with a little start, that her hostess was addressing her, and that they were alone together.

CHAPTER VI

ANNE had fallen into abstraction. Minniglen—the name ran like music to the ear of the spirit. McClurg, of Minniglen, it was as good as Joscelyn of Joscelyn Court. She had known, with an intimate conviction, from the beginning that she had to do with the most perfect type of gentle thought and breeding she had ever met.

Half the night, and all the long morning of rest, she had passed and repassed through every moment of those strange hours in his company, and ever with an increasing sense of the rare quality of the unconventional being who had rescued her; who had succored not only the forlorn, weak body, but also the more forlorn, the yet weaker and more strayed soul. Minniglen—there was a ring of knighthood in the word; of an exquisite lost ideal of chivalry. Everything fitted. His disdain of the intrusive plutocrats—oh, she found him there! "My hills!" He had spoken those two words in a voice to which love gave melody. He, indeed, was not like to barter, to sell the land of his fathers for anything that a Hanks could offer. What was it that Lady Brooksbury had said? For once her sentimentality had struck a genuine note. He would not barter his beautiful birthright for a mess of pottage. And someone had jeered at his "broad Scots," the kindly tongue in which he had said such kindly words to her.

To Guinevere, he had not spoken at all. What could he have found to say to a Guinevere Hanks? McClurg of Minniglen—this meant that, without too much difficulty, she could meet him again. She began to plan a meeting, to surmise the manner of it, brooding over the picture stamped upon her brain of the stern, keen face with the obstinate chin and the curiously illumined eyes under the shadow of jutting brows; of the strong hands with the red glow of the match in them; of the lean strenuous silhouette, bare kneed. "He went about like a gillie!" said the superior Sidney.

"My dear," Lady Weyford was saying, "I can't express what I feel to see you sitting there, so safe, after all the anxiety."

It was at the sound of these words that Anne looked up and realized her position. Her hostess was surveying her with eyes as affectionate as her speech; but there was something appropriating in the gaze which the girl felt with a vague discomfort.

"You are very good," she said, in her slow way.

"Not at all—not at all," returned Lady Weyford. "It has always been my principle to regard my guests as having as much claim on me as my own family." Cherry Bradles not being present, it was evident that Lady Weyford must do her own trumpeting. "It would have been, I assure you," she went on, "a matter of the deepest concern had even a visitor's maid been lost from this house. I would have seen to it that the rescue parties were constituted immediately and sent out, in every direction, with the utmost speed."

She paused; and Anne, feeling that it was expected

of her to applaud these noble sentiments, murmured again:

"You are very good."

"But, when I was told that you were missing," proceeded Lady Weyford, "I cannot conceal it from you that I felt it more than if it had been any other member of our party, excepting Weyford, Cherry, my Sid or my Guinie.—My Sid!" repeated Lady Weyford, and paused. And meaning grew alarmingly into archness in her eyes and smile. "My Sidney was nigh to madness. I shall never forget the expression of his face, when he burst into my room.—'She's lost! Mater, she's lost!' he cried. He's always called me mater since his school days.—'Who's lost?' I screamed. I will not pretend, my dear Miss Joscelyn—or rather, I think it is not out of place I should call you Anne—my dear Anne, I will not pretend that my first thought was not for my Guinie. 'Don't tell me Guinie's lost!' 'No, mater,' he said, 'it is Anne!' 'Thank God!' I cried. One day you yourself will understand the feelings of a mother's heart. 'Mater,' he exclaimed, 'can you look at me and say, thank God?' I looked at him. I'll never forget his face. Then I understood. 'My poor boy!' I said."

"Mr. Hanks was very kind," said Anne, uncomfortably, after a ghastly pause.

Lady Weyford, who was far too much possessed by the sense of her own importance, that of her son and heir, and of the family in general, to perceive the nature of the feeling expressed in Miss Joscelyn's whole

attitude, looked benevolently and yet more possessively at her.

"Weyford and I," she resumed, drawing a breath of gusto, "have always said to each other that, so long as our children married in their own sphere, so long as there was nothing against the character, or the family, of the young lady, or the young gentleman, we would never allow any considerations on the score of money and ambition, to interfere with the course of true love. It may be that Weyford would like his daughter-in-law, the wife of his heir, to bear a title of her own. Or maybe he might have wished to see the great fortune he will leave his successor matched by another great fortune. There are many charming girls," said Lady Weyford, "in both these categories who would not say nay to my Sid, I assure you! But, as I say, we put our boy's happiness before everything. And we are too well aware," the fond mother's countenance assumed a solemn, not to say pious, expression, "of the dangers that beset a young man's path in life, particularly when he happens to be a handsome, dashing fellow, very much sought after in society, and well known to be the greatest catch of the day—if you'll excuse the slang phrase, my dear Anne. We know too well, I say, how easily, how easily he might fall a prey to some designing female, to some young person in the theatrical world. Young gentlemen mix a great deal in theatrical circles, these days. I can't say I like it. Oh, he might be marked down by an unprincipled person of the highest distinction, such marriages take place every day, alas! —a *divorcee*, an actress!" Lady Weyford shuddered.

"No, so long as the girl's a good girl, as Weyford said to me only last night, with good blood in her veins, the kind of girl that would make him happy at home and of whom he could be proud abroad, we'd waive the rest.—We'd waive everything," said Lady Weyford with a fat gesture, "for the sake of knowing him safely settled."

She paused, at last. Anne opened her lips to speak; sought in vain for some phrase which would appropriately combine a firm desire to be dissociated from any discussion connected with Mr. Hanks' matrimonial aspirations, and the politeness due from a young guest to an elderly hostess. But Lady Weyford found this silence natural, and becoming. She proceeded, drawing another of those long sucking breaths which heralded her bursts of eloquence.

"The girl that gets my Sid will be a happy woman. There are not many young gentlemen in his position—indeed I think I'm not exaggerating when I say that his position is almost unique—who can offer such guarantees of solid happiness. I am not speaking of wealth, Anne, but of character. He's been a steady boy, has my Sid! He's led a good life: trust a mother's intuition. He's never gone from me, Miss Joscelyn—Anne, I mean—that I haven't said to him, as I gave him my blessing, 'keep good, Sid.' And each time he comes back and he lifts his clear eyes on me, I know, before he says it, that he has kept good. Good as his father before him. Oh, that's been a moral man! An earnest, Christian, church-going man, all his life. And maybe you have heard that he's what some people call a self-

made man. But he comes of good stock. There's many a fine family gone down in the world, and gone up again, as I know by my own. The gentlemen of the Heralds' College have now found out that we come originally from the De Hanche in Picardy. I will show you the pedigree, my dear, this evening if you like. And the Bradles, too, are good Saxon. Red Dragon, that is what they call him, said to me himself 'as good Saxon, Lady Weyford, as ever came out of Middlesex. Good stock, good blood.' There's many of your old titles," said Lady Weyford, slightly weakening in her argument, "that can't show a pair of children like mine. There isn't a blemish on either of them; not from head to foot! Their skins are as smooth, and as white! If he wasn't so tanned by exercise Sid would have the complexion of a girl——"

Anne got up abruptly. She could not stand this a moment longer.

"I am afraid I shall have to go and lie down," she stammered. And, without waiting for permission, she fled from the room.

"I think we shall get on very well, indeed," said Lady Weyford, comfortably discussing the situation with Miss Bradles, an hour later in the splendid intimacies of her dressing room. "I've been having quite a nice little talk with her. She's shy, poor little thing."

Anne was a good head taller than her hostess; but Lady Weyford spoke figuratively, looking down from her tower of prosperity.

"She's madly in love. Anyone can see that," said Miss Bradles. "I was really sorry for the girl," she

went on, "dear old Sid gave himself away so hopelessly. And Nancy there, was in such a state of fluttering, she couldn't as much as drink her tea. Oh, I saw it all."

"She was certainly very much overcome just now," Lady Weyford smiled at herself in the glass. "She rushed away. I think she was afraid she might burst into tears."

"Well, my dear, think what it must mean to her. She's the luckiest young woman in the three kingdoms. Upon my word," amended Cherry amid a perfect running fire of mirth, "it wouldn't be too much to say the luckiest girl in the world. Wouldn't little Pen give her eyes to be in her shoes. Well," summing up with gusto, "the Joscelyns are a grand old family, and Nancy's as high-bred a girl as ever I have seen."

"Of course," said Lady Weyford, with some repression. "I'm not saying I would not have looked a little higher for my Sid, if I had the picking and choosing for him. I'd have had a title, or more money to even up things a bit. But as I told Anne, I would not have it on my conscience—and no mother should, to my thinking—to interfere with a young man's marriage, now-a-days, so long as there is no real drawback. I'll not have any young hussy from the Gayety wearing my diamonds——"

"Sid was never that sort," cried Cherry. No wall-hung weathercock could be more faithful to the faintest change of the wind than was Miss Bradles to her sister's moods. "I feel for you, Carrie, your boy could have anyone. Anyone. There's scarcely a girl in society,"

said Cherry, with much truth, "that would not be ready to jump at him. Lady Pen, as I said, and Lady Amy, and the honorable Irene. Not to speak of that darling little creature, Lady Caversham, and she the twenty year old widow of a marquis."

"How you do talk, Cherry!" interrupted the mother, with asperity. "I would not have liked that at all. No second-hand for my Sid, if you please! Nor would I care much for Lady Pen, for all she's a duke's daughter. They're very well for a house party; but I tell you plainly, I don't much like their goings on, either of them. And if the duchess wasn't cheating at that last game of bridge, and didn't get up from the table twenty pounds the richer of my money, that she had no more right to than if she'd picked it out of my purse ——There, there, it isn't that I mind the few pounds; but I'm not sure Sid has not shown himself, as he always does, bless him! the cutest of us all. He's singled out a quiet girl, a real lady, and——"

"And you'll mold her, Carrie. You'll mold her!" concluded Miss Bradles enthusiastically.

That evening, while the Autopleyel was rolling out its most languorous waltz, Sidney Hanks proposed to Anne Joscelyn in the oak parlor, and was refused, in terms that lacked nothing on the score of decisiveness.

For one brief moment the poor youth looked at her as if he could not have heard aright; then, with an inarticulate ejaculation, sprang from that too contiguous seat on the sofa beside her and rushed from the room.

"I have done it, now," said Anne to herself, and

laughed nervously. She was angry still, but with a dawning sense of ruefulness: she had burned her boats with a vengeance.

As she slipped upstairs by a back passage and entered her bedroom, she knew that no other course lay before her than to make the most prompt exit possible from Orchar Castle. She sat down by the fire, shielding her burning face from the glow while trying to warm her ice-cold feet, and reviewed the situation. It scarce mattered what excuse she produced in the morning. The usual lie would be more than usually transparent; but what would it matter? and they would certainly not want to keep her. She must go: and yet she had wanted, more than she had ever wanted anything in the world before, to remain in Glenorchar—her only chance of meeting Minniglen. Why had she been so impetuous? The most ordinary feminine diplomacy might have devised a rejection which would not have deprived the bumptious Sidney of all self-confidence.

> "I knew it was wise to dissemble your love
> But why did you kick me downstairs!"

she quoted drearily to herself. What had made her so angry? She knew. It was because she had been near to bartering her soul and honor, only yesterday; because, had that strange hour in the mists not intervened between her yesterday's self and what she was today, she might—nay, she felt she inevitably would—have ended in capitulation. She saw what she would

have been in the light of those eyes that had looked at her over the last leap of the match flame; and the words of scorn and indignation which she had flung at her wealthy suitor had been, in truth, addressed more to that degraded self than to him. Yet how insufferable he had been! Would anyone but a Hanks, she asked herself angrily, have thrust his addresses upon her after the manner in which she had treated him that evening! Had she not markedly turned her shoulder upon him, although Lady Weyford had archly paired them for dinner? Had she vouchsafed him anything but the chilliest monosyllables when forced to answer him, through the meal? Had she not refused to dance with him, later, and actually walked away from him when he approached? And, when Cherry had succeeded in trapping her into the oak parlor, would not anyone with the faintest instinct of a gentleman have realized the distaste with which she found herself alone with him? Well, the deed was done. She must leave Glenorchar, and with it all hope of seeing her only desire fulfilled.

It was not even as if the affair had been conducted in any kind of decent privacy. The services of Sidney's whole family had been enlisted. There had been that grotesque interview with Lady Weyford in the afternoon. And, before dinner, only the entrance of the Chilean attaché had prevented, seemingly, Lord Weyford from folding her to his white waistcoat. Every member of the house party, indeed, had had a smile, or a glare, full of meaning, in her direction.

She must go. The worst of it was that she did not know a soul in this part of the world except her present

entertainers. She had not a chance, she repeated bitterly to herself, of meeting Minniglen ever again, once this house was closed to her.

Faintly, along the padded passages and through her closed door came the dreadful haunting of the dance tunes. It was the tango, now! She might have been gamboling with the rest, amorously clutched by the heir of Weyford; with the united smiles of the first baron and his lady beaming upon her, and Cherry Bradles' best jokes exploding like squibs about her. She might have looked forward to owning a two thousand guinea automatic orchestra of her own; to hanging herself with pearls and glittering in diamonds, and, in the meantime enjoyed as much affluence in advance as she cared to accept. Or she might have dallied with the situation. She could have played a tactful game, have remained on, until she had accomplished her purpose, and met Minniglen—Minniglen, whom the most elementary artifice would have drawn to Orchar Castle, through the duchess's intermediary. But what would the man of the mist have said of one who could have chosen either of these courses! Only by acting as she had done could she have felt herself fit to meet again that deep luminous gaze—the gaze that had sought, not her, but her soul. Better never see him more than blur the light he had given her.

CHAPTER VII

MISS BRADLES took pleasure in informing every guest at Orchar Castle that her brother-in-law had come to a special arrangement with the Post Office Authorities, by which his mails were dropped at the nearest little station on the Highland line; so that, the bag being fetched at an early hour by one of his own cars, those whom he delighted to entertain had the privilege, inestimable amid these wild hills, of enjoying their correspondence and their early cup of tea together.

Anne's correspondence, on the morning after her refusal of the son of the house, consisted of two bills forwarded in the parlor maid's scrawl from Eaton Terrace. She knew quite well that each would bear the inscription "to account rendered," with a label of some color or other requesting attention to the same; unless indeed they happened to be accompanied by a passionate appeal—"to avoid unpleasantness"—for a cheque by return.

It is possible to suffer acutely, when taking a particular course of action, without in any way repenting it. Anne turned over the envelopes with a languid finger and felt that to open them would only put the last touch of odiousness to an unpleasant awakening. Such as they were, however, they must serve her purpose. She summoned her maid—aggrieved, from the

noble breakfast board of the housekeeper's room—and sent her forthwith with a message to Cherry Bradles: Miss Joscelyn had received disquieting news from her father. She regretted to be obliged to ask Lord Weyford to send her to the station by the first available morning train.

The girl stared a moment, with a darkening countenance. "Well, you are a fool!" said her angry, shrewdly apprehending eyes.

"Do you hear me, Collins?" asked her mistress sharply.

With a toss of the head, the maid withdrew. It was only last night that she herself had been toasted by the waggish confidential valet as "the future honorable"—in virtue of her young lady's forthcoming precedence. She understood clearly what had happened; knew that Miss Joscelyn had flung away the chance of a life time. "As soon as ever we get out of Scotland, I'll give notice. And she'll be an old maid, and go wanting to the end, as sure as eggs. And serve her right!"

Anne was a little surprised at the celerity with which her damsel returned. She was also surprised at the tone of the message brought back.

"Miss Bradles says it will be all right. And there's a train at eleven fifty-five. And there will be something to take you to the station, miss."

Collins underlined the "something," with perhaps an unconscious imitation of Cherry's own emphasis.

Before the last hairpin had been placed in the dark tresses, with a brisk knock at the door, a housemaid entered carrying a tray.

"Her ladyship thought," announced this functionary, "that Miss Joscelyn might find it more convenient to breakfast in her room this morning."

"Thank you," said Anne; "that suits me quite well."

She was amused and relieved; but she could not help being a little angry too. To be cast out from the Weyford bosom was not nearly so painful a matter as to be drawn into it; neverthelss this was incivility, and vicarious incivility at that.

The housemaid departed with a flounce of crackling linen, frock-linen specially woven in stripes of the Weyford colors, as Miss Bradles never omitted to point out: blue and yellow.

Anne's packing was completed. She was dressed, to her motor veil. Her big fur-lined cloak, rather worn and out of date, lay on the bed. She had quite half an hour to wait until the moment when the "something" would be drawn up for her conveyance before the five year old medieval porch. She had time for reflection. Her slow eyes moved round the room; and, as she took in its details, from what seemed to her a new point of view, she smiled. The pink satin *duvet* with its bunch of velvet roses at each corner, had slipped from the bed, drawing with it the *crêpe-de-chine* coverlet; and the single great blanket (which Anne had vaguely found strangely stiff if insufficiently warm) displayed a center piece of embroidery: the arms of Weyford, in heroic proportions, surmounted by the inevitable coronet! Inevitable indeed, for it reappeared on the wood box—of ormolu; on the linen basket of the same inconceivable material; on the ala-

baster bath next door with its silver taps and towel rails, heated. There was a Dresden china toilet service on the imposing alabaster table. But visitors were expected to perform their ablutions at the labor-saving apparatus in the corner—to which, all silver and marble as they were, Mrs. Markham was wont to refer, ribaldly, as the sinks. "I could never have borne it," said Anne to herself.

Her eyes wandered to the paneled walls, white satin brocaded with rose-buds. The furniture, upholstered to match, was (with a freak of inappropriateness in which the girl thought to recognize Cherry's bounding imagination) ebony, tortuously and fatiguingly carved in Indian style. "Just a girlish bower!" had said this personage as she introduced the guest to the room. And Anne remembered how, in the first impression of shining white surfaces and pink buds, already surfeited as she was with splendors, she had thought, "Chintz, thank God!" and how she had laughed to find it—what it was.

However they might fling about their gold, she reflected now, it always produced something brazen, something that took the skin off one's sensibilities, like the blare of a German band. "I wonder, dear Miss Cherry," she had heard Mrs. Markham say, with her saccharine insolence, the night before, "that you don't do as the Spitzmans do, and have inverted coronets for the waste-paper baskets. I thought it such an original idea."

Cherry had hesitated for half a second; but she was sharp enough to scent sarcasm and had laughingly

declared that dear Lydia was trying to pull her leg, and that when Lydia knew Carrie a little better she would realize that what that refined nature most hated in the world was the least approach to display. "If I had sold myself," pondered Anne, "I would have become brass too, and have been branded with the Weyford stamp."

It was striking eleven on the Big Ben chimes of the hall clock when she emerged from her room. She saw Cherry coming towards her down the length of the corridor.

"Good morning, Miss Joscelyn," said this latter, the moment she was near enough to speak. "Lady Weyford begs you will excuse her. They have all gone off to Cairndonach, where the marquis has his big shoot today. Pray, don't mention it. I will be able to join them, in my own little runabout, oh, in quite good time. It is my duty to see that my sister's guests are looked after—to the last. Carrie would not have the least of her guests neglected. She would not let even a governess leave her doors without due care that everything was right. 'Convey my regards to Miss Joscelyn,' she said. 'And Lord Weyford's and my regrets not to be able to bid her a personal good-by.' All our cars have been required to take Carrie's guests to Cairndonach; but we have told the factor to put his *puttebakker* at our disposal. And my sister sent a special message that he was to put on the canvas top, in case it should rain. Good-by, you'll excuse, won't you, my not going downstairs with you? My maid is waiting to put on my things. Good-by, good-by! I hope

you'll have a pleasant journey, and that you'll find Mr. Joscelyn better."

Anne went down the Gothic stairs, with a heightened color and her head very erect. She resentfully got into the stuffy enclosure of the *puttebakker*. Her luggage was piled up beside the driver's seat. A footman, who had been deputed to look after her, came running down the steps; salverless, he thrust a note into her hand, declaring familiarly that he had been near forgetting that Lady Brooksbury's maid had bidden him give this to Miss Joscelyn.

"He's putting the half crown you gave him into his eye, miss, and looking after us—that impudent!" declared her own Abigail, furiously peering under the cover.

"Like master, like man," said Anne, disdainfully.

"Good gracious, miss, I hope not!" cried Collins.

Anne laughed out loud at this cryptic remark; and Collins muttered to herself that she did hate being made to feel mean. But though Anne laughed, her spirits were sore enough. "I ought to dismiss her," she thought wearily. "But can I afford it?"

The road along which they sped, at a jolting pace—the springs of the factor's car were of the useful but not luxurious kind—ran through a country lonely almost to desolateness but full of incomparable poetry. The rough growth of the deer forest, the undulation of the hills pressing down into the lower valley, alone broke the wide stretches where the bog myrtle breathed forth its scents; where pools glittered, clear brown as cairngorm crystal; where the cotton-sedge lifted its

fairy distaff. Ever and anon she could hear the plaintive cry of the whaup, and the voice of the burns, but no other sounds save that of the car's rough progress. Her soul lifted again. Here was the austerity, the barrenness; here were the free spaces that had nurtured Minniglen. She had chosen to go out into some such region of poverty and proud isolation herself; her spirit could meet him there,—if ever they met again.

"You haven't opened your letter, miss," suggested Collins.

Anne's lips parted to rebuke; but she closed them again, with a mental shrug. She looked down at the letter in her hand. The ubiquitous Weyford coronet was embossed in red upon its rough gray surface. Could she ever have made such a one as Sidney Hanks understand that the very sight of those four pearls nauseated her? Well, she had better see what Cordelia had to say.

Anne, [the letter began:] how noble of you, Anne! Your golden soul has freed itself from the toils of dress, and you fly away—oh, so immeasurably beyond the earthiness in which we remain—which yet imprisons your poor Cordelia! But my thoughts follow you.

Alas, beloved child, what a sordid world this is! You know how I was looking forward to seeing you at Coryton as usual next month; but you know too, darling, that the dreadful pair, *i fratelli abominabili*, are expected. Yes, Hanks, *frère et sœur!* You could not meet them, now, it would be so awkward for you: I would gladly, so gladly, put them off. But my poor mercenary Brooky has business

with Midas. How wise you are, Anne, to shun matrimony: it is prison for the spirit. But you will come to me afterwards—soon—sometime. Say you will! I shall write. I long to see you, for our souls are one. Ever your own devoted CORDELIA.

Anne slowly tore this effusion into small pieces, stretched out of the car and let the rush of air blow them from her hand. The visit to Coryton in the autumn had been a more or less annual affair. Cordelia and she, cousins, had been close intimates from childhood. Anne's visits had become a kind of habit of the Coryton list. Now she understood. Cordelia would "yearn" for her, on paper, "in her soul"; but in the practicality of social existence her place was to be filled with something more useful. Miss Joscelyn, high-bred, cultivated, good looking—Anne knew she was all that—might, as the wife of Sidney Hanks, with illimitable money, have shot forth as a star of the first splendor in the firmament of their particular set. But a Miss Joscelyn, poor, nearly thirty, dependent on the hospitality of others; not at all ready, either, to enter into the new "joyous spirit" of the age, well, for such a person there was, frankly, no room.

Only two nights ago Cordelia had sat beside her, held her hand, fawning while she vowed that the one bright spot of that terribly uncongenial gathering she was forced to convene at Coryton for the big shoot, would be the presence of her beloved Anne. Never had she insisted more tenderly upon her appreciation of Anne's gifts. Now the girl who had refused a golden

destiny could almost hear the very tone in which Cordelia would sigh "What a pity it was she could no longer have dear Anne at all her parties. But she felt it would not even be kind to ask her. The poor darling had no garments;—she was so obviously out of it. No, Cordelia, high-minded as she was, could really not expose anyone she loved to so cruel an ordeal!"

She would have her, in a dear little party of two, just by themselves, when she could look beyond the poor angel's shabby clothes to the shining glorious soul. "Why should I mind?" said Anne. But she did mind.

It was a day of mingled mists and sunshine, there was moisture on the strong air that, despite the smothering canvas covers of the car, blew against her face—aromatic. It tasted and smelt of the myrtle, of the dying bracken, of the wide, pure, wet moors. She bent, her arms on her knees, to look out upon the flying panorama, forlornly. As she watched the gleam of moral satisfaction fell away; it seemed to her that she was leaving behind her both the possibilities of her life, the spiritual as well as the material: the high hopes hardly visioned, and the splendid, tangible opulence within her very grasp. She was going into a kind of blackness—a dark tunnel, leading she knew not how far. She only knew that it was dark, since even such lights as those afforded by the Cordelias of the world were like to fail her one by one. "I shall be traveling third class too," said Anne with a little bitter smile at herself.

CHAPTER VIII

THEY had passed through the prosperous gray stone streets of the little town, and reached the station, well before their time.

Anne left her maid to look after the luggage and began pacing the long open platform, falling back to her musings.

The view from the railway, set on high ground, was curiously beautiful in its stern and typically Caledonian vastness. The sun was struggling through banks of those soft clouds that do not menace but give landscape and perspective to the skies; out of which the rays come thrusting forth, like pointing fingers, strangely and wonderfully golden. The distant range of mountains running westward passed from moment to moment through a phantasmagoria of lights and shadows; crests gleamed, became glorified; vanished and gleamed again. Yonder a rounded shoulder of hill glowed rose-bronze, and across it the shadows flew, pale indigo, to run past and out upon the plain. It was, she thought, as if great emotions were astir in space; as if divinely monstrous thoughts chased each other across the face of nature. Everywhere was movement in spheres beyond the human ken. The verse of a half forgotten psalm: "Who maketh the clouds his chariot; who walketh upon the wings of the wind," sprang into her thought.

She knew that had he, whom she had met in the mists, been beside her, he would have understood, without speech between them. She strained her eyes towards the distant, silent mountains. Where was he, the one creature on earth who had remembered she had a soul? Then it came to her that it might be well if they never met again, they who had drawn close to each other, in mystery and peril, and found each other after a fashion unknown to any of her world; even to those who by vows spent existence in common. In the crude light of day, how would that strong, kind face look to her? Nay—colder fear!—how would those illumined and illuminating eyes look at her, seeing the poor Anne Joscelyn, a waif of futility that she was, one of the kind whom Heaven and Hell alike reject; neither bad enough for the mischievous folly of her own world, nor strong enough, good enough to make a new and better world for herself? "I am of those who are outcast," she thought, "the lukewarm."

She turned her eyes, full of a last yearning, upon those hills from which help would never come again; and, even as she did so, there came to her, suddenly, the unmistakable discomfort of one who is being watched. She turned sharply—the sore of heart are seldom patient—and found that she was, indeed, being watched, from the other side of the line. Her heart almost stopped beating.

The man, a gentleman, was tall and broad shouldered. He was clad in rough shooting clothes and had a cap pulled down over jutting eyebrows. The eyes that were fixed upon her—with a strange intensity, she

could not but mark it—were brilliantly light in their dark setting, full of a pale fire. The face was young, —oh, much younger than she had believed, youthful of the middle-twenties. But it was the same lean, jutting line of jaw; the same clean cut strength of outline, as of something hewn, not carved: granite, not marble.

For a couple of breathless seconds they gazed at each other across the line. His look was not one of recognition, but rather of wonder. And, all at once, as if just realizing that she had been aware of his scrutiny, he dropped his gaze and turned away; but not before she had seen a slow red mount to his tanned cheek.

"I am mad," said Anne to herself. "It is not he. Why should he crimson like that? Why turn away?" She could not think of him as self-conscious and conventional; a kind of silly boy to stare, and blush when caught.

A porter came along the opposite platform; or rather was drawn along by the straining bounds of two laverock setters, coupled together and dragging at their chain.

"Wull you tak them yoursel', Minniglen?" cried the man, affectionately respectful and familiar all at once, after the sturdy Scottish manner. "Hech, but they're wearying for ye, the puir beasties. I maun get the leddy's luggage across."

Minniglen!—Anne stood, openly staring in her turn. The moment seemed charged with the importance of a lifetime.

She saw the noble creatures—surely a laverock set-

ter is the very patrician among dogs—leap lovingly upon their master, the chain clattering upon the pavement. Linked together as they were, he staggered under the onslaught as he returned the caresses. One, stronger than the other, pulled his comrade sideways; there was a snarl, a grapple; and both fell over the ledge of the platform upon the line.

Anne never knew exactly how it happened, for the noise of the approaching train was beating dire confusion in her ears. She heard shouts, screams of warning; but she found herself, in one leap, down among the rails, her arms about the struggling brutes. The next instant someone was down there beside her; someone, strong as he was agile, who enfolded her, grasped her with one masterful hand, while he caught the dog's coupling chain with the other, and dragged them all in a single savagely irresistible sweep to the safe side of the line, his back against the wall.

"I knew it was you!" cried Anne.

The roar of the oncoming train engulfed her like a mounting wave. She thought it was death and felt an ecstasy. Death, the best of all in that unbelievable way! Howls, interwoven hideously, startled her from what might have been a swoon: the poor beautiful setters—must they die too? She opened her eyes. They were being hoisted on the platform by the porter. As she looked up she saw the sweat drip from the man's face.

"I think," said a voice close to her ear, "if you don't mind walking a few paces down the line, you can get back to your platform quite easily."

His hand was on her elbow. Confused, trembling in every limb as she was, with a sudden terror, she could not miss the odd note, as of shyness—a fierce wild shyness—in his voice.

Collins, meeting her at the incline, seized her arm in a high state of hysterics. It was the commonplace that laid hold of her once more.

"Oh, miss, how ever could you!"

Here, the young man opened his mouth as if to speak, but shut it dumbly, and merely lifting his cap moved away.

"My sakes, Minniglen," said the porter, "but yon was a close shave!" Across the border, men are not given to overcharged expression.

"It was your own damn fool fault, for letting the dogs loose, Mac," said the young man, in pleasant, even tones.

"I was thinking of the leddy, in such a hurry—" began the porter. Then with more excitement than he had yet displayed, "Hout, but ye'll lose your train, Mr. McClurg"; but the other had turned upon his heel and was retracing his steps.

"It must just wait a wee bit langer," said Minniglen over his shoulder, with an accent as broad as the porter's own.

He walked straight up to Anne; and, again lifting his cap from his close cropped tawny head, said abruptly:

"I thank you for your brave love of the beasts."

The color welled into her face. She who had never known diffidence, was overwhelmed with it, perhaps

because of the treacherous turmoil which seized her at his approach.

"Oh, I could not see them perish—" she stammered. "I never stopped to think—"

"No," said the man, and his face was lit up with a smile that was as sunshine on the rocks, "you did not think. If you had, you know, you'd have seen that there was plenty of time to pull them up without any fash."

"Oh!" cried she.

"Thank you just the same. I've got to take that train."

With a bound he was gone after the porter and his dogs. Anne remembered how her rescuer had sprung into the mist with the leap of a deer.

When she found herself alone in her compartment, away from the prying eyes of Collins, she burst into tears.

They had met again. They had parted. Again they had looked upon death together, this time close and hideous. And the end of it all was an absurd anti-climax. There is no situation more utterly ridiculous than the unnecessarily heroic. She need not have done it. . . . "But thank you all the same. I must catch my train."

CHAPTER IX

"OH, it is all too, too exquisite," sighed Lady Brooksbury. Her great eyes wandered as she spoke. "I felt I could not come with an unsympathetic soul. You are so wonderful, darling Anne! You understand as no one else does, you're like an Æolian harp to the wind's music. I can hear in you the harmonious echo—" She broke off. Her roving, haunted gaze became fixed. "Isn't that Pen, with the Weyfords, in that box?" she murmured, in her unchangingly deep, tragic tones. "It's almost settled about little Pen, I believe. Can you see if he is there?"

"He?"

Anne echoed the word, dazedly. She had not been listening to her companion's outpourings; she had not wanted to bring her mind, from the deep well of sensation into which it was plunged, back to the gimcrack platform of Cordelia Brooksbury's emotions. But the haggard eyes were fixed now upon her: she was expected to answer something. If she only knew what!

"He?" she said again. "Who is he?"

"Who is he?—my darling Anne, haven't you heard? Pen is going to take compassion on Sidney Hanks after all. Of course she couldn't love him, darling. The poor child! we all know that her heart has been given away, irrevocably. But he loves her."

The faintest gleam of spitefulness appeared in Cordelia's orbs. Anne smiled, to feel how completely she was beyond its reach. She knew very well that her invitation to Lady Brooksbury's ground floor box this night had been due to the merest spasm of friendliness; a spasm caused, no doubt, by the circumstance that a certain very great lady had singled out Anne Joscelyn at a fashionable charity concert recently. Miss Joscelyn would be in request as a program-seller for many a year to come yet, even if she could no longer be looked upon as an asset at the specially up-to-date intimate parties. Sidney Hanks? What could Anne Joscelyn feel about Sidney Hanks, with the Grail music ringing in her ears? Or what could it matter to her that it should please Cordelia Brooksbury to be spiteful on such a subject? Spiteful she was for no reason that Anne could imagine, as she looked back at her, with a lazy amusement, from her aloofness, unless it were that she regretted the momentary good nature which had admitted one who was becoming so unimportant to her opera box.

"You saw, dearest," said Cordelia, "how mad he was already about her, last autumn, when we were together at Orchar Castle. Of course you saw: for if I remember rightly, darling, you were wise enough to snub him when he was trying to make use of you as a stalking horse. Oh, I admired you so much for it." She smiled sadly, and added: "Poor dear Anne!" in an insufferable tone of sympathy, and lifted her opera glass to stare at the great box where Lady Weyford displayed as many of her diamonds as her ample shoulders could

support. "No, he is not there. But there is no mistaking Pen's face. She's got that settled look: you know what I mean, darling—Ah, there he is, down in the stalls, in the gangway."

Anne's glance involuntarily followed the new direction of her companion's lorgnette. She saw Sidney Hanks' sleek black head and his flaring shirt front, where the jeweled studs flashed; and she had not the faintest shadow of regret.

At home it was different. In the little house, growing shabbier every year, where her querulous old father, now a more complete invalid than ever after a second stroke, demanded unceasing attention, where expenses increased, even as resources dwindled with the alarming rapidity with which do dwindle the incomes of impecunious people. Anne would not have been human if she had not had moments of regret and of failing courage; if she had not wondered at herself, railed at herself, for a foolishness bordering on insanity; even sometimes reproached herself for gross unfilial selfishness. She lived in an incomplete world. Why, in Heaven's name, could she not have accepted compromise as gracefully as her neighbors? There was a kind of honest English goodness about the whole Hanks family, for all their vulgarity and boastful display. When Lady Weyford had said that her Sid had "kept good," Anne knew that it was the truth; and she had recognized also the true motherly love that shone out of the woman's commonplace face. Boundless aspirations towards fashion Lady Weyford might nourish, but she would not have fulfilled them at the expense of her

son's conscience. "Keep good, Sid! And when he comes back to me and lifts his clear eyes, I know he has kept good." And they all love each other. If Lord Weyford dropped his h's, not even the passionate smart Guinie had a thought other than pride in her heart for him. They blew each other's trumpet till you were deafened and giddy; but the special meanness that belongs, as a rule, to the "climbers"—creatures above all things anxious to pull up the ladder by which they have mounted—was utterly unknown to them. They stood by their own friends: Grosvenor Square did not forget Portchester Terrace. They would have got persistently, inevitably, upon Anne's nerves at every turn; but they would never have wounded her by an unkindness. She would have blushed for them, till she could blush no more; but she need never have blushed, shocked by a callousness or a cruelty. Could she not, after all, have made a kind of existence for herself, like so many another; taking the good things of the material world with both hands, and finding an outlet for her more transcendental emotions in the art, the beauty, the choice, delightful society she could have gathered round her?

Even that very afternoon, when she had put on her well-worn black satin dress and noticed how bald the fur collar of her opera cloak was growing, she had told herself that it was entirely her own fault if she was not wrapped in ermine, stepping down to her Rolls-Royce, to be whirled away to her grand-tier box. But, after Parsifal's lament for the swan, she had had a glimpse once again of that inner self which the sor-

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didness and futilities of existence had a power of obliterating so completely that she sometimes ceased to be aware of it—sometimes indeed ceased to believe in it. But here it was; very much alive, very powerful: a force she could not go against: a force likely, after all, to be the ruler of her destiny. So much the music told her; so much the incomparable glory of sensation, the blend of generosity, beauty, strength, passion and victory, that is the genius of Wagner, made her realize, beyond the possibility of doubt.

And when some of the deeper meaning of the theme filtered through the ecstasy of the senses to the finer perception of the spirit—Parsifal "the stainless fool," the Parsifal of the last act, wakened by pity—a pulse of exquisite recognition throbbed in her. She knew him. She had met him, lost and wrapped away in the secret heart of the glens.

The other, hardly less strange, meeting had become overlapped by the first, in her memory. The sting of ridicule—most destructive, most disintegrating of all emotions—had made of it a recollection to be shunned rather than dwelt upon. If she ever found herself inclined to linger over the moment of inexplicable rapture that had seized her when, gripped to his breast, she had thought that death was tearing towards them both, she would start away from it like a shying horse, her cheek flaming; recalling the unspeakable idiot she had made of herself, and his smile as he had said: "there was plenty of time to pull them up, without any fash."

But now it seemed to her there had been something

of the first, wild, innocent Parsifal—of him who unwittingly broke the element rule of the Holy Forest—in the strong, shy, being who, caught gazing at her, had blushed; who had saved her, and his hounds, in a single leap of strength; who had mocked her with his smile; whose eyes had flashed and glanced away; who had gone from her like some woodland creature that dares and flies. Then she saw Sidney Hanks, and rejoiced; rejoiced even in her privation, her loneliness, her continued renunciation.

The "honorable Sidney" did not appear so jubilantly bridal as Lady Brooksbury had fondly depicted him. He had a preoccupied, not to say discontented, expression. And Anne thought that he deliberately avoided looking up at the family box, where Lady Penelope, in all her pert painted prettiness, was unabashedly signaling to him. Anne knew that had it not been for Parsifal this fact would have slightly pleased her. His opaque stare kept steadily to the lower tier; and, in its wandering, inevitably reached their box. Anne involuntarily drew back behind her hostess, and then noticed with consternation that her rejected suitor, with a smile of recognition, began to steer a determined course towards them.

There was nothing for it but to display herself again. She drew her high velvet chair to the front and, leaning her elbows on the ledge, addressed some remark to her companion with an assumption of unconsciousness belied by her heightened color.

"What is it, darling?—Oh, Anne, there is Sidney Hanks coming this way; how awkward for you!"

Anne thought it was awkward, indeed, when, as their eyes met, she saw the young man start, color, and hesitate with the obvious impulse to turn on his heel. But the impulse was transcient. Scarlet to the top of his ears, Sidney Hanks came valiantly on.

"How de do, Lady Brooksbury." He turned to Anne; looked at her full—it was the old, pathetic dog look that had once moved her to compassion. "How de do, Miss Joscelyn." He gave a gasp. "Awfully glad to see you."

Anne leaned over and held out her slim hand; but she repented the movement when she found it grasped and pressed with a spasmodic grip that almost drew a cry from her. She winced still more, mentally. Poor Sidney! so it was still that way with him! And what a pity that he could not be content that she too should be still unchanged. As she drew back with a little jerk of her chair, she saw hope leap again into the prominent eyes that were devouring her and, once more, she recoiled from him with every instinct.

"How beautiful our little Pen is looking tonight!" chanted Cordelia. "Her dear little face actually shines across the house—don't you think so?"

Sidney detached his ardent regard from Anne to fling a perfunctory glance in the direction indicated by Lady Brooksbury's huge feather fan.

"Lady Pen's face looks much the same as usual," he opined, "except that she seems to have it on a bit thicker." Then, with an uneasy laugh, and the corner of his eyes veering round to the silent figure within the shadow of the velvet curtain; "I daresay

she's got the little pots marked up in gradation, you know. Tea party—dance—opera. Tea party very quiet; opera, kind of scene painting, what?"

Here his orbs came round full upon that oval, downcast countenance, the fine pallor of which owed nothing to art.

"Fancy you at Parsifal!" said Cordelia, with an insolent yawn.

Not a shade of the little scene had escaped her. She had no use for either of them. There was no room, in her soulful hedonism, for the inconvenient idealist, or the honestly faithful lover.

The "honorable Sidney" glanced at her with a shrewd gleam in his eyes.

"Just strolled in, you know, with some other fellows. Don't pretend I like it. Rather rot I call it. Don't you think so, Miss Joscelyn? Though it hasn't started you yawning like Lady Brooksbury—I'm awfully glad I came though."

Here darkness fell upon the house, on the sudden lowering of the lights, and the sad moaning test of the instruments rose from the invisible orchestra. Anne drew a long breath, half relief, half expectation, and straightened herself in her seat. Mr. Sidney Hanks withdrew. She heard, vaguely, the whispering and shuffling of belated comers.

"This way, sir," said a muffled voice. "Row F, third seat."

The tiny gleam of the attendant's electric torch leaped, was extinguished and leaped again. Anne, watching, she scarce knew why, saw a tall man's fig-

ure, dimly defined in the gloom, struggle into the place indicated. The torch gleamed again. It was only for a second; but, within the small circle, a face was painted for her; a face so indelibly stamped upon her memory that it was as if the revealing ray had illumined her secret soul as well as the external world. The overhanging brows, with their frowning intentness; the clean hewn features, the locked strength of mouth and chin—he of the mists!

The evil music of the Klingsor magic broke out into the theater; but, upon the inner ear, the spiritual "ditty of no sound" sang the pure theme of Parsifal. By what strange premonition had she felt his presence in the music, even before he had stepped into that empty seat? The meeting had come so singularly upon her own recoil from "the shades of the prison house" and the upward beat of her soul on the wings of the music, that her usual balance was for a little while completely overset. She felt certain that no mere coincidence, but rather a beneficent design of providence was guiding her fate. It was no more chance that brought him there before her at this hour of recognitions and renunciations, than it had been chance that had made him cross her path in the mists to save her from despair and death. It was an answer; a promise almost like a betrothal.

She could not see him unless he leaned forward. And, in the next *entr'acte*, some instinct of shyness too strong to be battled with, or it might have been some vague terror lest she should find in his eyes a want of

recognition—worse, a desire not to recognize—kept her in shadow.

Lady Brooksbury monopolized the front of the box, pouring deep-noted ecstasies and sighing asides of little flatteries into Pen's inattentive ear. The latter had come round, with Lord Weyford, who after bowing pompously to Anne, stood displaying his vast white waistcoat in full view of the stalls.

Anne abstracted herself. She was glad she had not attracted Minniglen's notice, remembered the scorn of his tones when he had alluded to the Weyfords, and the frankness of the millionaire's statements concerning him. She must wait, she must be content to wait. There was a strange inner security that they would be brought together, and that soon.

But, presently, when the visitors had departed, Anne, stirred to the very core by the opening music of the third act—that inspiration of ineffable pity mingled with Easter joy—she involuntarily bent forward and turned her gaze to seek a glance of kindred understanding from the one being in the world who could understand.

With eyes dazzled by the bright light of the stage, she thought to distinguish, through the dimness of the auditorium, the stern outline of his face. She did not look again. It was enough. A satisfaction such as she had never known took possession of her; as though the cup of her soul had been filled to the brim. She must carry it very preciously; must beware of a jar that would spill a wine so rare.

The mood lasted to the end of the opera. When she

rose to leave, and stood gazing a moment into the emptying house, and saw the black erect figure with the close-cropped dark chestnut head overtopping the crowd, disappear at the door, she had no room for regret: only an odd increase of pleasure that he had no one to take care of, that he was alone.

In the hall, Sidney Hanks rushed up to them. Could he pick out Lady Brooksbury's man for her? He would. But ought not Miss Joscelyn to stand out of the draught? It was raining cats and dogs. Having accomplished his errand, he came back breathless. They'd have to wait a bit. How had Miss Joscelyn liked the show? As for him, he was awfully glad, now, he had come.

Anne answered, as if in a dream, she never had been so happy in her life. And, in the profound egoism of her abstraction, she did not notice the kindling of Sidney Hank's face, at her words. Nor did the fervor of the whisper with which he declared that he "would never forget tonight—never!" pierce beyond the material ear.

Her attention, however, awoke again when a word—Minniglen—struck to her consciousness like a dart.

"Saw that fellow, Minniglen," Sidney Hanks was saying. "In the stalls. Queer show for him to come to, what? Though for the matter of that—" he chuckled, fatuously, "queer show for me to come to."

"Minniglen?" echoed Anne. Her straight brows were drawn together.

She fixed her grave eyes on Sidney Hanks. Never had she looked at him like that. "Jove," the poor

young man thought, "she's found out that I'm not such a bad chap after all."

"Did you say Minniglen?"

"Funny name," he guffawed. He was an abstemious youth, and had never known intoxication. But he knew it now, under Anne's eyes. "Allen McClurg—our neighbor up in Scotland, you know. That is the Scotch way. If the pater hadn't his title, they'd call him Glenorchar over there. By the lord," cried Sidney, struck with a new idea, "that is the fellow that found you on the moors, and wouldn't stay to be thanked. Yes, he was right under Lady Brooksbury's box. Must have seen you. Didn't come up to say how de do, did he? Oh, I forgot. You never saw each other's faces. I remember that was the joke of it. Besides, by George," said the young man facetiously, "he'd have cut you dead, if you were his own cousin, after staying with us, what?"

But Anne was pursuing her point with the soft relentlessness of which only a woman is capable.

"I suppose this Mr. McClurg—Minniglen as you call him—is very seldom in London?"

"'Pon honor, I don't know. See him about sometimes. He's got an old aunt of sorts, Lady Grizell Kennedy. Jolly name isn't it? Suits her down to the ground, too. Grizelly by name, grizelly by nature. Got money, you bet."

"Come this moment, Anne!" Lady Brooksbury's contralto ordered. Her eyes flung fire and fury upon the young man. "You said you'd keep watch on the door, Mr. Hanks! There's John waving frantically. Good-

ness knows if I've not missed my turn. The least you can do, Anne, is to hurry, considering I have to go miles out of my way to see you home."

Anne was too deeply lost in her dream to remember whether or not she had said good night to Mr. Hanks. Cordelia hustled her through the crowd and into the car, flapping the wings of her opera cloak like an angry hen.

As the car rolled out from under the archway and gathered speed, Lady Brooksbury addressed her, with a restored softness in her voice that was more dangerous than her momentary lapse back to nature.

"You never told me, dearest, that you had arranged to meet Mr. Hanks. It is not quite straightforward of you, darling. You know my silly good nature and how I am always only too anxious, too ready, to help my friends, but I do think that it was a desecration to make use of Parsifal for that kind of thing. Parsifal is so sacred, so—what is the matter with you?" The natural Cordelia peeped out again,—"you're not even listening!"

Anne turned with a radiant smile.

"I beg your pardon, Cordelia. I am afraid I was not. It was all so wonderfully sacred, as you say. Beyond words, I cannot thank you enough. Did you ever meet Lady Grizell Kennedy? It is like a dream to me that I heard my father speak of her."

"My dear Anne!" said Cordelia, after a hard stare.

They were passing an arc light; Anne's face was lit up by that most unsparing of all illuminations. It was incredibly softened, rejuvenated; a faint smile was on

her lips, and her eyes were looking across her companion, as into some golden distance. "Is it possible!" thought Cordelia. "Anne, with her ridiculous standards, can she really care for Sidney Hanks?"

"Grizell Kennedy—Grizell, what a name!" she drawled, and yawned. "Don't you understand me better than to think I could ever know anyone with such a horrible sound to her name? What a question!"

CHAPTER X

WHEN Anne came in, that night, she committed an unwonted extravagance. She lit herself a fire in her bedroom, though it was April. As a rule, unless upon the bitterest winter nights, Miss Joscelyn managed, as her grandmothers had done before her, to go to sleep without such luxuries. She sat in her warm, shabby dressing-gown, gazing into the coals, long after they had kindled into an incandescent mass. Half the time she mused, half the time she sought for the tail of a memory, hunting it down dark alleys and round elusive corners. Why was the sound, Grizell Kennedy, so familiar to her? Her father must have named it, in his occasional rambling reminiscences of youthful and brilliant days. Yet it seemed to her that but quite recently she had seen it written, and that in some familiar conjunction.

She was no nearer her quarry when, with the fading of the glow upon which her eyes were fixed, a sense of chill added to her weariness brought her to the realization that her fire was going out; that she had no coal scuttle; and that, yes, it was a quarter past three. As she looked away from the little silver traveling clock, her glance fell upon the framed photograph that flanked it; Jane Joscelyn—"*The* Miss Joscelyn," as she was known to the group of devoted women whom she, in her exquisite, elderly spinsterhood, led, soft-voiced

and indomitably spirited, in the most relentless suffrage campaign.

Aunt Jane! now she knew. How could she have been so stupid!

Miss Joscelyn, president, The Lady Grizell Kennedy, vice-president, Miss Joscelyn in the chair, supported by Lady Grizell Kennedy. Nay, had there not been a time when Miss Joscelyn and Lady Grizell had bailed out a too impetuous sister for an alleged attempt to box the Home Secretary's ears? It was indeed on that occasion that her father had inveighed at his greatest length on the subject of suffrage, lamenting that one whom he remembered as a modest well-mannered girl, should have developed into a mænad.

Anne sprang up and went to her writing table. It was but yesterday she had received a communication from her little bellicose relative, enclosing a circular on the subject of a monster meeting at the Albert Hall in furtherance of the Cause.

Unlike that of her father, Anne's attitude towards the raging question was one of such complete aloofness that she hardly was aware of its existence save for the amusement which that delicate amazon, her aunt, occasionally afforded her. Her visits to the small high-perched flat overlooking St. James's Park were few and far between, because of her father's irritability, which would froth to a kind of frenzy over the subject of Woman Suffrage. He had, indeed, forbidden her all intercourse with the member of his family who, in his estimation, disgraced the name of Joscelyn.

Pulling open the drawer in which she had thrust, un-

read, the last suffragette effusion, Anne drew out the printed sheet: if Lady Grizell's name were again in evidence, she thought, there would be an opening. It was in evidence; not only once, but several times. Lady Grizell seemed to be the leader of a procession from the East End. She was to address the meeting at the Albert Hall, on the subject of "the Women Workers' Will to be Heard," after the Reverend Amelia B. Splunge, of Jacksonville, Penn., had spoken on Woman's Sacred Right to the Ministry. Moreover Lady Grizell Kennedy was secretary to the undertaking.

Anne, her lips tilting into a transient smile, looked for the address; Charles Street, Mayfair. She remembered Sidney Hanks' witticism and its odious insinuation: "you bet, she's got money!"—as if Minniglen, the Minniglen who would not sell a rood of his arid stony land for anything a Hanks was willing to offer,—was like to be influenced by mercenary thoughts. Neither could she fancy him—her smile came back again—attracted by the noise and fury of the Woman's Movement. But Scottish people were clannish, the very word, the idea it represented came from over the Border; and her Scottish knight was kind to an old, lonely aunt, and was tolerant.

She gave a sigh as she sat down to write. If her poor father were only kinder, more tolerant himself, how different her home life might be. They could laugh together, gently, over the queer little Aunt Jane; and she would have no need to be writing in secret, to make an underhand appointment.

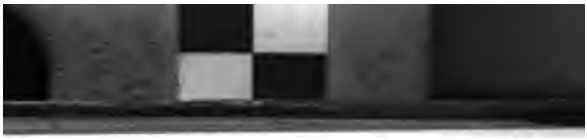
DEAR AUNT JANE:

No, I cannot walk in the procession. I do not know if I could slip in to the Albert Hall, though I rather doubt it. But I would like to come and see you quietly. And I would like, too, to meet Lady Grizell Kennedy. Father has been saying dreadful things about her. Of course they are not true; and I want to meet her, too, for a reason of my own. I will not tell you what it is. And you will not ask me, nor wish to know, because you will agree that a woman has a right to silence on her private concerns as well as to a voice in public matters.

"Poor little J. J. will be in a flutter!" thought Anne, as she fastened the envelope. "She'll think I am being converted at last!"

The better Anne, the transcendental second self that had sprung into such brightness and strength of being a little while ago, had withdrawn altogether into some lost fastness. Here was the normal Anne, rather tired, rather self-centered, who found life such a burden that perpetual accommodations had to be made with it, if she was to get along at all. There was something new, however, even in this everyday Anne; a tense desire, and a relentless purpose to achieve it. She was not afraid of the equivocations of her letter.

She lay long awake, watching the dawn grow behind her chintz curtains, her cheeks burning, her pulses throbbing; wondering if indeed she had hold, at last, of the thread which, followed, would lead to the goal of her aspirations: acquaintance and intercourse with Minniglen. She was quite sure of one thing: no matter



where it led her, up or down or round by devious ways, she would not let go.

We all have experienced the singular absence of emotion that sometimes replaces, at the moment of crisis, the most constant and racking agitation. When Anne, the next evening, read her aunt's reply—it was very prompt, sent by return of post—she felt neither surprised nor exhilarated. It had been so easy, then; just a touch on the machinery of life! She had had, as it were, but to stretch out her finger and, lo, it was done!

Miss Joscelyn wrote in the flowing conventional hand which suited that small, conventional personality, so oddly and quaintly engaged on the subversive campaign.

DEAR ANNE:

Oddly enough, Lady Grizell is dining with me tomorrow night. So I think you had better come and dine too. Seven forty-five. Please don't be late. I hope you won't make a mystery with your father about your coming. Any woman over twenty-one who submits to domestic tyranny is riveting the fetters of others. Perhaps you are beginning to understand things a little better. I hope so.

Your affectionate
AUNT JANE.

P. S. I am sorry to say Lady Grizell is bringing her nephew, who is staying with her. As he is probably the ordinary kind of a young man who thinks of nothing but tramping hills and dales, I will take care that he does not trouble your conversation together.

Anne laughed. She was, for the moment, absolutely

unstirred. She had no sudden feminine twist or distaste for an object so easily attained; her mood had not changed, she knew that there was no purpose more strongly set within her than making the acquaintance of Minniglen. Nay, when she came to think of it, that was the only purpose of which she was conscious at all. But she, who had passed a restless, fevered day, alternating between heats of expectancy and chills of despair; she, who had held Aunt Jane's envelope in her hand with a sick reluctance to open it, now tucked it in her belt without a tremor, and read the other letters brought by the evening post.

One was from Lady Brooksbury; and as she perused it, Anne first frowned, then smiled. She was about to tear it up and fling it from her, when, upon a second thought, she replaced it in its envelope. Then she went up from her cold solitary dinner to the invalid's overheated room, humming the Swan *motif* under her breath.

After a preliminary conversation, in which the inferior cooking of Mr. Joscelyn's sweetbread, and his positive conviction that the nurse drank his special brandy, were thoroughly if fruitlessly discussed, Anne delicately approached the subject of leave of absence for the next evening. "I hope you will make no mystery with your father," had said the sternly consistent Jane Joscelyn. Anne laughed naughtily, looking down at the letter in her hand.

"I have just heard from Cordelia Brooksbury. She wants me to dine with her tomorrow night."

Mr. Joscelyn's delicate, high-featured ivory-pale

face contracted anew with a hundred fretful wrinkles.

"What, again?"

"I hardly like to refuse. She——"

"Oh, indeed! How surprising! You hardly like to refuse anything, it seems to me. All this gadding about, all this perpetual racket——"

Anne shot a look of alarm at the old man, who, rearing himself in his padded armchair, began to shift, with fluttering, irritable gestures, the eiderdown that covered his half-paralyzed legs. Once, perhaps, every month or six weeks, her father would be seized by an unaccountable but equally unsurmountable objection to her absenting herself from home, even for a few hours: was this mood again on him today? Had she been brought face to face with a blank wall, after seeing the way lie fair and open before her?

Without pausing to consider what he, who had looked into her soul at Glenorchar in a night of mists, would think of it now, she shook open Cordelia's letter and began to read it aloud:

"DARLING ANNE" [raising her voice, to drown the irately ironical interjection which commented on such affectionateness, she proceeded]: "Do come tomorrow night. I have asked Sidney Hanks——"

"What's that, what's that?" interrupted Mr. Joscelyn again, but quite in a different tone. He stretched out eager fingers. "Give me that letter, Anne, I insist on seeing that letter."

"It cannot be helped," thought Anne, as she yielded the sheet to his snatch. Peering he held it under the

light of his shaded lamp. She could tell, by the movements of his lips, the moment when he had reached the passage at which she had been arrested.

I met him in the Park, this morning, and asked him to dine, you know, darling, that I am always only too glad to do anything for you. Of course I could not mistake the little scene at Parsifal——

"What's the meaning of this? What does she mean by Parsifal? Oh, the opera, the opera, Anne—" He caught at her dress and looked up at her, his eyes now lit with excitement. They half pleaded, half threatened. "Anne, Anne, you know what this would mean for me——"

"Oh, father," said Anne. She fell on her knees beside him. Bitterly she felt her deviation from straightforwardness. It is, indeed, the nemesis of the naturally honest mind, that any departure from the clear path is so often, and so immediately punished. "Father, don't ask me. I——"

He pushed her from him, almost beating the words back on her lips with a hasty gesture.

"No—no! I ask nothing. Tell me nothing. You are a good child. A good child. Here, take back your letter, and do what you like. I ask no questions. No questions."

When she had reached the door, he called her back to kiss her and pat her head, saying again she was his good child.

Anne went to her room with a dreadful weight at her heart; a sense of guilt and blackness. All the savor

had gone out of her prospect. She was not even sure that she wanted to carry through her little fraud to its logical end. But, when further thoughts presented the suggestion of writing a refusal to her aunt, and even a possible acceptance of Lady Brooksbury's invitation, she knew, by the immense barrier of opposition that forthwith reared itself within her, that these were impossible alternatives.

She sat down and wrote her two letters. Both were brief. She promised Miss Jane Joscelyn that she would not be later than seven forty-five; and she told Cordelia, without any comment, that she was engaged to her aunt tomorrow night.

CHAPTER XI

MISS JANE JOSCELYN'S flat was one of the smallest in the huge pile of recent erection near the Green Park.

Anne hated driving into the gloomy chasm of the courtyard. The place seemed to her like some high-class penal settlement; and the sense of that immense concourse of dwellers in the restricted space was suffocating. She hated, too, being shot upwards in a lightning lift—as if she were a parcel in a pneumatic tube. But, once inside the odd, small nest perched almost under the roof, she found it pleasant enough. In all seasons she liked the immense view from the window. In the spring especially the vision of green over the park was exquisite. She liked the quiet yet choice surroundings in the little elderly lady-spinster ménage. And a certain spotless, selective atmosphere; a serenity of thought; a peculiar impression as of perfect satisfaction, struck her each time afresh, with an amused pleasure; so oddly in contrast was it with the violence and assertiveness of the hostess's proclaimed creed.

But this evening, when she crossed the threshold into the tiny hall and the cherubic parlor maid had relieved her of her cloak, there was for Anne no such amusement, no sense of serenity. Her heart was beating thickly; she had caught the sound of a man's voice within. A few moments later, it was as much as she

could do to fight a self-consciousness acute almost to faintness, at the sensation that Minniglen's eyes were fixed upon her. She knew, confusedly, that the young man had risen; his unusual height dwarfing the little room to ludicrous proportions. She felt his gaze steady upon her; but had no idea of its expression. Was there surprise? Was there recognition? Did he know that here was one whom he had twice saved; and more, since it had once been a rescue greater than that of mere life? Or was it just the stare at an ordinary stranger who walks in upon a restricted circle? A woman looks so different in evening dress. Ah, no—she could not believe that those eyes which saw so far, so deep, could be blind eyes here!

Miss Jane gave her a little dry kiss, like a peck.

"You're three minutes late. Grizell, here's my niece. Lady Grizell Kennedy, Anne. Now you two know each other. It's hardly worth while your sitting down together, though. Dinner is sure to be ready—Oh, I forgot! I forgot you," said the little spinster, turning to her male guest, "though I'm sure," she gave her short laugh, "you're big enough! Mr. McClurg—Miss Joscelyn."

Not the least anomaly about this quaint figure of rebellious womanhood was Miss Jane Joscelyn's marked coquetry. "I like young men," she would say contentedly. "And they like me." A favorite theory with her was that it was the woman's own fault if they were what was known in her circle as "doormats." "Not the fault of the men; for, if you will lie down, you'll certainly be walked on, or stepped over." Men, generally,

in her eyes, were a rather dull-witted, helpless, slightly inferior community; afflicted with unfortunate tendencies which could never be too severely deprecated—nevertheless a community which, if women had only done their duty to them and to themselves, could have been instructed, purified, and finally elevated. Miss Jane Joscelyn was very hard at work in that direction, and it was, of course, part of the propaganda to be kind and encouraging.

Alas, for strict logic! She preferred her pupils to be young, athletic and good looking; and, if possible, clever. She was not quite sure yet of her friend's nephew's qualifications on this last point. But he was certainly good to look at.

"My gracious!" said Miss Jane, as, with a giggle, she lifted her minute mittened hand up to his arm—for the cherubic parlor maid had announced dinner with unimpeachable promptitude.

The spinster trained her household of two, herself, and according to her own views. She had girls in relays from her old home; and conscientiously passed them on to more important situations when she deemed it time for them to have a rise.

Anne, in a dream, went beside Lady Grizell into the familiar dining-room. When young McClurg had shaken hands, she had flung a swift look up at him. Did he know her again? She could not in the least make out. She could think of nothing to say to Lady Grizell in answer to the latter's pleasant-voiced remarks, so conscious was she that his eyes were upon her as she walked in front of him.

At a round table, that could only seat four people comfortably—the dining-room was never permitted to entertain more—you must be in very close proximity to your fellow guests. Anne found herself opposite Minniglen; but for the whole of the first part of the meal he kept his eyes between his plate and his hostess: chiefly on his plate.

"Allan is a very silent person," said Lady Grizell, looking at him, however, with a good deal of proud affection.

"Dear me," snapped Miss Jane. She had vainly shot brief tentative sentences at her cavalier, in the hope of finding a subject of mutual interest.

Lady Grizell, happily, talked enough to keep a dinner table going. She was an agreeable looking woman, with an irregular, fresh, yet worn face; lit up by the most vividly intelligent green eyes, Anne thought, she had ever seen. Her abundant hair, sandy, streaked with gray, was banded on either side of her forehead, and looped in plaits, after the fashion that was popular when she had been a young girl. Following the same obsolete modes, she had a black velvet ribbon round her neck, from which depended a large gold locket with a center sapphire set in a star. Her garment was likewise of black velvet: no one ever saw Lady Grizell in the evening otherwise robed. She had a determined but harmonious voice; and a swift pronouncement; an air of complete satisfaction in her own conclusions—an air, indeed, as if a matter, once defined by Grizell Kennedy, was settled beyond possible dispute.

She now gave a comprehensive, and at the same time terse, review of the grievances and aspirations of the women mill hands in Lancashire. She laid bare, with a fleering yet a reticent tongue, the anomaly of all the government acts up to date in their regard. A vague question of Anne's, on the subject of the forthcoming speech at the Albert Hall, had let loose this flood of criticism.

Anne listened scarcely at all; but her aunt, abandoning the sterile task of entertaining young McClurg, contributed little snorts and ejaculations; and now and again some pertinent gloss of her own, which prevented the discourse from being altogether a monologue. At last, mindful perhaps of the duties of an entertainer, Miss Jane turned again upon the single representative of the incompetent sex, and said, with her small chuckle, dry as a grasshopper's note:

"I hope, Mr. McClurg, that you are profiting!"

"Profiting?" echoed the guest with unexpected emphasis. "I should rather think I am."

He lifted his bent head with a free movement. His curious luminous gaze was shot with amusement.

"Ha! I am glad to hear you say so." Miss Jane's delicately wrinkled olive face flushed ever so slightly. She scented battle. And there were few things in the world which she more thoroughly enjoyed than a battle with a personable young man, on the woman question. "And what are your conclusions, pray?"

"I have drawn a good many conclusions," said young McClurg. "But it might not be civil of me to mention them here."

"Don't think you'll offend me," said Lady Grizell, comfortably.

"Well—I have come to one conclusion, anyhow," He turned his face towards his aunt and smiled at her. Anne's heart quickened: that smile, brightening with such peculiar sweetness, the rather saturnine young face, evoked for the first time that evening something of the glamour of her glen memories. "That is," he went on, "if you ever get into Parliament, Auntie, I'll never go to hear you speak."

Here his glance met Anne's, and that ingenuous color which had already once struck her as, somehow, out of keeping with her conception of him, flooded his face. He did not look away, however, but added boldly:

"What do you think of it all?"

"I?" Anne was startled, and then laughed. "I am one of the old-fashioned, of the weak-minded people."

His gaze kindled.

"You mean you hate the whole shrieking nonsense!" he cried boyishly.

"I mean," said Anne. She hesitated a moment. "I mean that I think," she went on softly, "that women have always ruled the world, and that they are now in a fair way to step off their throne."

"Anne!"

There was a note of scandal in the elder Miss Joscelyn's voice. But Lady Grizell said with great suavity:

"Would you mind developing that text?"

Anne was irritated by the intangible but unmistakable assumption of superiority. An imp of mischief

sprang up in her. Her consciousness of the sympathy of the odd, intent being opposite to her stimulated her beyond prudence.

"Well, really, it comes to this. I cannot for the life of me see why we should go in for the immense fatigue and the unending boredom of chafing about the way men govern the world, when any woman worth her salt knows that she can make any man she chooses do exactly what she wants."

"Dear me," said Miss Jane.

"I am sorry," said Lady Grizell. "Jane," said she, "you did not prepare me for meeting a young lady with such unelevated ideas of her sex."

"If I were a man," said Anne, coloring, "I would rather yield what was asked of me, to a smile than to a coal-hammer."

The young man gave a single note of laughter, flinging up his head with the movement that Anne had already thought was like that of a stag.

"Wheedling, in other words. That is your ideal of womanhood," said Lady Grizell, after a pause.

Her tone was brisk and pleasant as ever; and the smile bland. But her green eyes regarded the weak sister with an amused indulgence, not unmixed with curiosity, which made the girl say to herself: "She looks at me as if I were a kind of beetle."

"I hope, Anne, you left my brother fairly well," said Miss Jane, now, with an intention so obvious of dropping an unprofitable discourse that it was worse than a silence.

Thereafter the small hostess kept the conversation

severely to neutral topics. And, scarcely allowing a decent interval for dessert, gave the signal for returning to the drawing-room.

"You will find cigarettes in the silver box," she said, with her chirping coquetry, to Allan McClurg. "You needn't hurry over your port."

Whether or not Miss Jane intended to have an explanation with her niece upon her disappointing behavior, it was evident that Lady Grizell had no such desire; for she roundly declared that Allan did not want any port and that he must come in with them and keep them company with a cigarette.

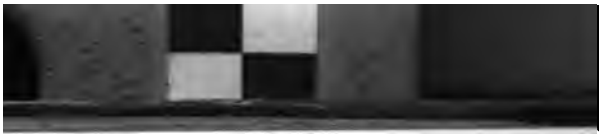
"I must smoke after dinner," she went on to Anne. "It is a necessity for my nerves, after my strenuous days."

This was not an apology, but the statement of a wise practice.

When Minniglen mutely handed Anne the open box, the girl shook her head. He gave her an odd smile. Did he remember? After drawing a small table close to his aunt, he deliberately passed his hostess who was making room for him on the sofa, and drew a chair beside Anne's. Lady Grizell looked at him a moment with her shrewd, appraising glance. She rose; and, with sedate deliberation, herself took the neglected seat, She turned then and engaged her hostess in low voiced and apparently urgent conversation.

It would have been impossible to evince more unmistakably the desire that her nephew should have free play. Suffragette as she was, with a poor opinion

of the masculine sex as a whole, it was no more easy for her to lose the mere natural woman than for coquettish Jane. Her attitude towards her gigantic nephew was that of an adoring mother towards a remarkable child of about five years old.



CHAPTER XII

WHILE the two priestesses of the latter day cult conferred together, there was a silence between the younger people. Anne felt she could not be the one to break it. The hour, for her, was too much charged with significance. The first words might be the turning point of her life.

He drank his coffee: laid the cup aside; lit himself a cigarette and puffed, all with great deliberation, his eyes fixed upon her with a gaze too profound and meditative to be called a stare; but one which she felt would soon prove beyond her endurance. Her lids dropped. She sat, with delicate long hands folded. There never was any restlessness about her; but a subtle observer would have seen the waves of nervousness that swept like shadows over her face. He spoke at last:

"Have I not seen you before?"

The question was abrupt. Anne had no answer for him; and he proceeded after a little pause:

"You were at the opera the other night, were you not?"

So different was the recognition she had looked for that she was extravagantly taken aback.

"Yes, I was there," she said flatly. "Did you like it?"

She was hardly conscious of what she was saying.

But when he exclaimed, with concentrated energy: "No —no! I hated it," she was so startled, so flung back from all her bearings, that she could only look at him, deprived of utterance. It was almost as if he had struck her.

He sat, bending forward towards her, striving to accommodate his great height to the spare Chippendale chair; his eyes were lit at last, she thought, with that look that had haunted her so austerely, yet so sweetly, these many days and nights.

"If I had known what it was like," he went on, "I would never have gone. There are some things—things that are too sacred! And all those people staring, in a theater, when you could hardly stand it in a church. It was—it was like blasphemy."

Anne drew a long breath and leaned back against her cushions. It seemed to her that she had been numb under a dead weight of disillusion: now, life flowed through her again, happily, warmly, joyfully. And she had thought, for an unbelievable moment, that she had lost him, as the traveler in the desert, upon approach, loses the mirage. He relapsed into silence. Miss Jane's old Persian cat, that had been circling round his chair, scenting a friend had familiarly leaped upon his knee; and with the sympathetic touch of the animal lover, he was stroking the massive purring head, his eyes still on her. "Allan is a very silent person," had said Lady Grizell in the tone of one adverting to a natural preference, as a mother might say: "My little boy is particularly fond of chocolate."

Just now Anne found the silence infinitely restful.

She let herself sink into it and into the strange radiation of that brooding look. She had re-discovered the sensation of being held about and encompassed by a strength immensely greater than her own. But the kindliness she had found so precious, so full of comfort, on that night of distress, had now become, in this sheltered, high-perched little room, something closer; she dared to think something more personal; yes, even admiring, even ardent.

But, presently, disquieting thoughts began to rise, like a cloud of buzzing mosquitoes into the sunshine of her content. He must have marked poor Sidney Hanks' offensive greeting; he might have noticed the youth's lingering halt by her box, might have guessed something of the truth; might perhaps imagine—horrible suggestion—that she encouraged, reciprocated! She sat erect; but approached the subject in the feminine way, obliquely:

"I think," she said, "I heard your name mentioned when I was staying at Orchar Castle. Are you not a neighbor of the Weyfords there?"

His face was inscrutable. After a pause, briefly, he answered in the Keltic fashion: "I am."

Your true Kelt never rests, as it were, upon the stationary base of yea or nay; but, in affirmative as in negative, is always moving—"I am," or it may be, "I do not."

Anne hesitated; in thought she hovered over, only to reject, two or three further remarks. And finally she said, somewhat inaptly:

"The Weyfords are very kind, after all."

To this he made no answer; unless a faint snort could be classed as one. Decidedly he had in him something of the wild stag. It was a sniff of haughty rejection.

"You don't know them," she persisted.

His eyebrows and a swift glance retorted what his lips were perhaps too polite to utter: "How do you know?"

"Oh—they told me," she exclaimed. And then, with a desperate little laugh: "They said you would not know them."

"Well, as a matter of fact I do know them. I say 'How do you do' every time we meet. And, upon my soul," said the young man, "it seems to me I am always meeting them. There is such a lot of them, with their cars and all that. And they're always out after something."

It was the longest speech he had made that evening. But, as if repenting its unamiable quality, he gave her a sudden bright smile, in that very boyish way of his that had already struck her with surprise.

"It's good, in the winter," he went on, "when there is not a creature about Minniglen—no one but ourselves, I mean: no one but the folk that belong there."

Anne felt as if the words shut her out. And she said, faintly sarcastic:

"Then you come to London, and run against them at the opera. Poor you!"

"I'd not be expecting to have London to myself," he answered smilingly.

She sat, discomfited, revolving all she longed to make

him understand, and finding it quite impossible to clothe her meaning in words, without an odious lapse of taste. At last she exclaimed:

"I am very poor, you know." His eyes had a gleam, as if surprise jostled understanding. "But when I see the Weyfords," she went on, the color welling into her face, "I don't want, I never want to be rich."

"Don't you, by jove!" said Minniglen thoughtfully.

He lit another cigarette, and absentedly caressed the beast on his knee. She hardly heeded the words, because the look he fixed upon her had started all her pulses throbbing. It held, nay it blazed a meaning she hardly dared to admit.

"Anne," said Miss Jane, with the admonitory cough of the hostess who sees her guests lacking entertainment. "Lady Grizell would like to hear you play. I have told her," she added, with her desiccated chirp, "that you can play much better than you can reason."

Anne got up without a word and moved to the "baby grand" that held most of the space in the little back drawing-room. Music was her one gift; but she was not fond of playing to people. To touch a note for the Weyfords would have been an impossibility. Tonight, however, she was glad to play—for, and to, Minniglen.

The young man watched her cross the room with her lazy grace; still hunched upon his diminutive chair; without, seemingly, a thought of those little services which should have been his: the opening of the piano, the setting of the stool. But when her fingers had strayed into a dreamy prelude of Chopin, he got up as if impelled by an irresistible attraction, and fol-

lowed her into the back room. And, propping himself against the wall where he could see her ethereal profile and the dusky nimbus of her head against the dimly lit space, he stood watching, lost once more in a perfect seclusion of contemplation.

"My dear," whispered Miss Jane Joscelyn to her companion, and there was something uneasy in her note of amusement, "he never takes his eyes off her. I did not have her here for him," she added.

Lady Grizell surveyed the picture with her unalterable composure.

"Allan does not care for girls as a rule," she remarked. "I am really quite pleased to see him notice one at last."

Anne slipped from Chopin to Schumann, and back again. She knew that he was looking at her, looking with more than pleasure. A woman is sensitive to such things, and Anne had known many admirers. But here was a difference—a strange and overwhelming difference. In the middle of a phrase she broke off abruptly:

"I can't play any more."

Her emotions that evening had swung as with rhythm of a great pendulum. When she had entered the room, and found his eyes upon hers, she had been overcome with an instant paralyzing consciousness of herself and of him. When after dinner he had sat beside her, his silence and his gaze had been almost unendurable until, with scarce a word, a link had been knitted between them; and then all had become easy, all beautiful, all sweet; his presence a fulfillment. But,

as the lovely dissatisfied music fell from her fingers, self-consciousness returned: or rather an acute sensation of her own personality with reference to his. The eyes she could not see she knew were fixed upon her, and the watching figure close by drew all her thoughts. Disquietude overmastered her. So she had risen quickly and left the piano.

"I must go, dear Aunt Jane," she said in a kind of soft, breathless hurry.

Miss Jane glanced at the clock. It was only a quarter to ten. Ten was her usual hour when, by an artful dropping of every topic of conversation, she gave her guests the hint for departure.

"You are rather early," she remarked with disapproval.

"There is father," said the girl uneasily. She had a desperate desire to be away, alone with herself.

"Oh dear!" said Miss Jane. "I never can see why an invalid should be encouraged to be so selfish, and spoil healthy people's lives. Well, good-by, dear. You must have your talk with Lady Grizell another time."

Lady Grizell now took the girl's cold hand into a warm, possessive clasp.

"I shall hope to have that talk with you, Miss Joscelyn," she announced; non-committally however.

"Well, good-by," said Miss Jane again. She hated the delays of departures. Since her niece wanted to go, the sooner she went the better. "I shall be able to draw out that queer boy more comfortably without her," she thought with a certain feminine satisfaction. "I won't ring, if you don't mind," she went on. "I

am sure Jenny is still washing up. She would hardly expect to be summoned before ten o'clock. Mr. Allan will help you on with your cloak. Won't you?" She glanced up at him with archness. "And he will see you safely into the lift."

All of which cavalier offices Minniglen accomplished in absolute taciturnity. But when, on the threshold of the lift, she turned to thank him and say good-night, he gave that single note of laughter which was all his natural gravity seemed able to allow him, and motioning her forward with a gesture, walked in after her. She laughed too, with a sense of pleasure, to find him, immense lean creature that he was, filling the limits of the cage almost to the exclusion of herself. She laughed still when they made that plunge down the deeps of the shaft which always seem to make the heart unawares; the cage went down like a stone; she felt exquisitely safe.

When he had placed her in her taxi, he at last addressed her.

"Of course," he blurted, as if the remark caused him an effort, "I know we met before,—I mean before I saw you at the opera."

Anne breathed a barely audible sigh.

"Ah——"

"We will have to meet again—somehow."

"To meet?"

"You don't think," he cried with a kind of violence, "that it can stop here, after—after that."

"You can come and see me," she murmured.

There was a pause. The flare of the lights in the

entrance caught his face obliquely as he half turned away, reflecting. She saw his jutting profile, the strenuous frown, and the liquid fire of his eye. Then he looked back at her, and his face was all in shadow; only his voice was vivid.

"No—you had better come to my aunt, that will be best. I will arrange it."

He fell back and the gaping doors of the mansion engulfed him. He had issued his orders and was gone!

There was more than amusement in Anne's laugh; there was delight. The proudest woman will find a joy in being mastered by the man she loves. Then she perceived that her taxi was still motionless, and she called her address to the driver.

It was a great confusion of ideas that surged and seethed in her mind during that all too short traject to Eaton Place. She hardly needed to ask herself—was this love? Two visitations there are which human nature can never mistake. Love and death. It must have been that she had loved him from the beginning, for all she had honestly believed the quality of her relation with her rescuer had been higher, finer, more spiritual. But then he, too, had changed. Indeed she could hardly reconcile the austere, aloof preacher on the hills with this impetuous, boyish personality. Again she thought the first Minniglen, the Minniglen of the mists, had been to her as the Parsifal of the third act; a man tried in human sorrows and practiced in heavenly wisdom; "the stainless fool by pity awakened," who had become the first knight of the Grail. But the second Minniglen was inexplicably the Parsifal of the first act—boyish,

and shy and bold together, with an air as of a stag on his mountain; conscious of his strength; poised, as it were, always for the wild leap. Yet was there not a reason for this change? She gave it to herself with a beating heart.

His life, she told herself, had been that of a young solitary; a dreamer of the glens and the wild hills. Worldly commerce would be a thing alien to him, and uneasy at any time. But if—nay, she knew there was no if; it was a certainty—love had come to him as it had to her, there was nothing strange in that he should wrap himself in a cloak of reserve; in that he should even be a little rough, adorably awkward, like a well-bred boy.

It was a very satisfactory conclusion. Love cannot come to a man without troubling his peace. There were ripples and cross-currents and storm tossings on the bosom of that lake that up to now had only reflected the skies. Must it not be so? Yet she remained conscious that she missed something. She was unwillingly sensible that the man she had met tonight, the man who had snatched her savagely from the menace of the oncoming train, brought her up no longer to the serene heights, but was hurrying her away from the things of the spirit towards the passionate earthly valleys. Save for one brief moment when she had found him again, the noble peace of their first intercourse was lacking. But she knew what lay underneath. In a night of the strangest darkness she had found the secrets of his innermost thoughts; the high serenity, the clarity, the strength, the beauty of them. She would find it all

again. It would return for her, at some future hour, when they two would meet, really meet once more. And then, with a little start, she realized that, perhaps, after all she would not go back to that first ideal at the sacrifice of his unexpected ardor.

CHAPTER XIII

AS her taxi passed into the stately dim purlieus of Eaton Square, the vision of her father, irritably awake, passionately awaiting the news he would never have, rose up before her. She felt a little faint. Had she not deceived him, deliberately encouraged false hopes, to facilitate her own desire? In ordinary circumstances, she would have faced and endured whatever unpleasantness lay in store for her; but she had played with the poor old man. She had cheated him, at the very moment she was thwarting his ambition. And, all at once, she was aghast at what she had done. It seemed to her that nothing, not even Minniglen, was worth this downward step.

Her heart was cold and heavy within her as she paid her taxi and turned to insert the latch key in the door. To her surprise lights sprang up instantly. Parlor maid and nurse came out of the dining-room to meet her.

"Oh, miss," cried the former, with a not altogether unpleasant excitement, "we didn't know where to get at you!"

The nurse intervened.

"If you will kindly step inside with me, Miss Joscelyn," she said, in her brisk hospital manner, "I would like a few words with you."

"My father?" questioned Anne in a low voice, all sensation in abeyance.

"Yes. Mr. Joscelyn is not so well, I am sorry to say. In fact he has had a rather bad turn. Won't you sit down, Miss Joscelyn? You look pale. The doctor has just gone. He would have waited to see you, but he has another urgent case. He will call again in the morning; though I am sorry to say, Miss Joscelyn, he has not a very good opinion of Mr. Joscelyn's condition. In fact—" the nurse flicked an invisible speck of dust from her impeccable cuff, coughed conventionally, and proceeded: "In fact, I cannot disguise from you the state of affairs. Doctor Abinger sees cause for great anxiety. To be quite frank, Miss Joscelyn—it is best to be frank, is it not? Oh, I do think so. I have always found it best to be frank. It is the truest kindness in the long run—Mr. Joscelyn has had another stroke. The third stroke."

She paused; and Anne repeated vaguely:

"The third stroke?"

"Well, we know what that means," said the nurse.

"It means," asked the girl, "that my father is going to die?"

The nurse coughed again.

"Well," she responded, with a slight note of impatience behind the urbanity of the professional patter, "Mr. Joscelyn is a very old man, and—well, Miss Joscelyn, I said I would be frank: the patient is not conscious. He is not likely to recover consciousness. Of course that's a good thing, is it not? That's the way we would all wish to pass."

"How long?"

The daughter's lips were parched and hardly formed the words. She made an effort and repeated them louder. The woman gave her a hard bright look, and answered in a voice to match:

"Doctor Abinger scarcely expects to find him alive in the morning."

Anne got up.

"I am going to him," she said.

The nurse hesitated; and then opened the door to let her pass.

So Anne sat, for the rest of the night, beside her father's death bed. Sat in her pretty new frock, with the cloak that she had found so much too shabby a few evenings ago, hanging still on her shoulders.

She was dimly conscious that she was cold; that her clasped fingers felt like ice one against the other. She was conscious, too, in quite an impersonal way, that the still, stiff figure on the bed, the face that already looked a death mask, belonged to her father—her own father. There was no sound in her ears but that of his stertorous breathing, which labored, and sometimes stopped, to take up again, with a kind of click as of machinery worn out; or sometimes came quick and pantingly as though in a hurry to be done with the allotted span. She knew—it needed no trained nurse to tell her so—that the moment would soon come when there would be a longer, and again a yet longer break, and thereafter stillness.

The nurse presently took the patient's pulse; then

she came across to Anne, and said, without lowering her voice:

"Sinking, very fast."

"Ought we not have the doctor again?" asked Anne, out of her numbness.

"You can if you like, of course, Miss Joscelyn; but it would really be rather unkind. Doctor Abinger could not be of the least use. It is always my principle not to disturb doctors unnecessarily at night. But, of course, Miss Joscelyn, you can do as you like."

Anne said no more. Her keenest sensation of that bleak night watch was that the nurse had most obviously decided in her own mind that the father's death would not too deeply disturb the daughter's equanimity.

"Why is she so sure? Does she think I do not love my father? Does she think that no one could love anybody so old and feeble?" Anne knew that this woman, with her terrible death-bed experiences, and her still more terrible business-like attitude towards them, was wrong. That, under the paralysis of her frozen heart, there lay deep waters ready to break and overwhelm her. But she knew also that, in a way, the nurse was right too. Anne had not known how she loved the old man; or, rather, had not known how to love. And, at the end, she had practiced a mean little deceit upon him. She knew she would never forgive herself for that.

When the doctor came, on his first round, the nurse was able to inform him that the patient had passed peacefully away two hours before. Indeed she took some credit to herself for the fact: and also for not

having yielded to Miss Joscelyn's desire to send for him.

The doctor hardly looked at the dead man's face. Yet it was well worth looking at, now that all the fretful and peevish lines had faded from it. Majesty was dawning upon its pale serenity; spreading almost like a light on the brows, under the silver hair. The lips were folded as upon a secret, sweet and austere. Who could have glanced at him and not know that here was one of great race?

Anne wondered. She had been kneeling for the last hours, and risen as the doctor entered, holding on to the rails at the foot of the bed, for she could scarcely stand. Only the intellectual part of her being seemed alive; and she wondered. The man that lay there had been a spendthrift, irritable, egotistic, not a loving father to her; one who had always laid the utmost claim upon her, and had scarcely, even to himself, acknowledged that she had a claim upon him. She remembered him handsome, gay, a favorite, admired even, and sought after in spite of their poverty. She never remembered him noble or devoted. How did it come that he should be spread about, as it were, with splendor?

A singular thought came to her.

There lay the man that God had meant him to be, and that human frailty had lost. The soul that had gone forth knew now what its destiny had been; and the reflection of this divine vision had stamped itself upon the clay.

Miss Jane Joscelyn would not enter her brother's

house until after the funeral. But, characteristically, she invited her niece to meet her in the waiting room of the nearest station.

"Wear a thick veil, my dear," she ordered, by telephone. "I know it's absurd, but your poor father hated my views. And he came to hate me, too, poor Jasper. He has a wider outlook now, I make no doubt. I don't ask you to come to me, either, dear, till he's buried."

"I would not," said Anne from the phone.

"I daresay you wouldn't. I'm sure you wouldn't. We're all very weak-minded creatures, dear. And there are certain instincts one can't go against. But I must see you. And, as I suggest, the waiting room at Victoria——"

"No, I can't!" said Anne, dropping the receiver, and walking away.

But Jane, if she was, as she herself said, weak-minded and ruled in this instance by sentimental considerations that would not bear analysis, was in her own way a practical woman. She interviewed the family lawyer, and sent a responsible representative to take the burden of painful detail from Anne's shoulders. She looked up the doctor; and the clergyman too; and gave minute and personal directions to the head of the firm charged with the funeral arrangements, and to the agent at Joscelyn Court.

Anne let others act for her, unquestioning. She was still as one who has had an odd kind of blow on the head, paralyzing all sensation; leaving unchanged but a single faculty of her mind: just the power of ob-

servation. She was as if standing outside herself, watching the movements of the numb creature, with interest, without surprise.

Miss Jane Joscelyn, as she sat with Anne in the mourning coach, and also through the long train journey to that spot of earth which had been the one passion of the dead man's life, wept, with little sniffs and a good use of the many pocket handkerchiefs with which she had thoughtfully provided herself, at regular intervals.

Anne's own eyes were quite dry. She felt hot and fevered, because she had slept hardly at all since that night—so long ago it seemed—when she had come home, dreading her father's anger, to find him silent forever.

Joscelyn Court being let, the two mourners were lodged at the Rectory, and the next morning, with the tribute of a goodly number of neighbors, and an immense concourse of farmers, tenants and laborers, who had been "Joscelyn men," the last male representative of that ancient race was laid by the side of his ancestors.

Anne's consciousness received an indelible if purely physical impression of the wild, lovely April day, of the green springing grass, and the sight of an almond tree, fairy rose, that topped the wall of the Rectory garden. Aune Jane had insisted on their return to London that very afternoon, partly because she was ever a restless little creature, out of her own home, and partly because the views of the Rector's wife on the subject of woman's position were more than could be endured in her present condition.

"I feel, my dear," she had said to her niece, "that I might let myself go. And that would be such a pity. Poor thing, she can't help being a fool!"

Anne was to accompany her aunt back to the little flat. Miss Jane had one spare room that she kept generally at the disposal of some earnest visitor from the Colonies, from America, or the provinces. She now proposed to give it up to her orphaned relative; and this, without a murmur. "I hope I know my duty," she had said to the lawyers, when discussing the younger Miss Joscelyn's unprovided and forlorn future.

The house in Eaton Terrace where Anne had felt so cabined and cramped, so weighted with difficulties—the financial difficulties that fill the life of the young housekeeper with constant, unnatural anxieties—was to be disposed of. Such as it was, it was all she had, and it was now to pass out of her life as a luxury she had no right to keep up: a home of her own, a roof over her head for which she was not beholden to someone else.

Anne knew that here was another sorrow, waiting deep down under the ice; that every corner of the sad little place had its appeal; that she would miss all the familiar objects, grown shabby, out of repair, which the very shifts she had made to keep up a brave appearance had unconsciously endeared. All was to be sold. Everything that could possibly be turned to money value was to be so turned: to scrape together enough to pay outstanding debts, and if possible, place a tiny fund between the daughter of all the Joscelyns and destitution.

Joscelyn Court, and the whole of that passionately loved heritage would pass now into the hands of one who was no true Joscelyn—a straying branch of the noble tree; a degenerate limb that had spread on to low ground, and taken root actually in commercial soil. "The Manchester Joscelyns," for nearly a century the phrase had been familiar upon true Joscelyn lips and contained in itself all possible obloquy. Mr. Joscelyn had ascertained that the next heir—true to an odious trade instinct—would have been willing to compound on the question of succession and join with him in breaking the entail. There was one way of doing this, and one only. Anne must marry a man rich enough and fine-spirited enough to assure to his wife and children the priceless heirloom. A son of Anne's could have taken the name of Joscelyn and been brought up to succeed to its honors. But now Joscelyn Court must go.

Jane was very eloquent those days, on the criminal, man-made laws of entail. She endeavored to awake her niece's intelligence on a point so obvious, by many a shrewd home-thrust which the girl felt ought to have hurt her dreadfully, but which as yet did not.

"I wonder you don't see it, Anne. I really think if you weren't perverse, you would see it. If common justice were allowed to be administered, you wouldn't be where you are. By natural right you are your father's heir. You ought to be stepping into his estate. You ought to be mistress of Joscelyn Court. Yes, I know it's let. There is nothing to say to it. Don't be silly. You are not silly—you just don't

think. Why should you take things for granted, because they exist? You ought to want to improve the world. You ought to come and stand beside me on the platform in your black dress, and say: 'Look at me. I have not got a home of my own, or a bit of bread that isn't given me. Why? Because I'm a woman! All my own father's things, his money, his lands, go to an incalculably distant cousin, because he's a man! He's quite well off. He doesn't want it. I'm a Joscelyn. He isn't really a Joscelyn. But it does not matter. He's a man. Man made the law. I am a woman; I am to suffer. I am to be a beggar, because other women won't help to make better laws. Sensible laws!' "

Anne listened apathetically. When her aunt had reached the end of her jerky harangue, she hardly remembered what it was she had been asked to do. And, when the little lady exclaimed: "I would like to tour with you: in your black dress. And put you on every platform—" she gave a wan smile, believing that she was expected to appreciate a joke.

The girl's curious state of insensibility persisted, although the blows dealt her by the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune came to her well-nigh from every side. Each time a lawyer's letter arrived; at the end of each consultation, her affairs seemed to present a worse aspect. Unknown indebtedness was forever cropping up. Obligations, already allowed for with generous margin, totaled into undreamed magnitudes. Mr. Joscelyn had been a man concentrated on himself; had refused himself no whim. And everyone knows

the drain which an invalid and two nurses make upon small resources.

Anne was told that the few unentailed pictures must go. Then it would have a good effect with the creditors if she gave up her jewels. She unclasped her mother's pearls from about her throat and handed them to the lawyer without a protest. What did it all matter? Since she could feel nothing: nothing mattered. But the hour came when a side shaft struck her; and, with the pain of that unexpected wound, all the other wounds cried out.

It was some ten days after her return from Devonshire and her entrance upon her new existence in the little high-perched flat. It had already seemed to her as if she had been for years Jane's companion. The ways of the flat had grown into routine. Jane's meticulous regulations—and, on some points, she was like one of those fussy little French clocks that hurriedly strike every quarter of an hour—had stamped themselves upon the fabric of Anne's daily life. Jane liked silence for fifteen minutes after meals; then a fifteen minutes' walk, with conversation; to be followed by fifteen minutes' rest, for both. "You look pale, dear. Go and lie down. I insist on it." Anne had grown used to being summoned before her tired head had had time, it seemed to her, to find the right spot on the cushion. Business was conducted upon the same lines and the process would begin *da capo;* with slight variation of tea and visits. Jane knitted green-purple-and-white comforters for her league of suffragette flower girls, fifteen minutes after dinner. Anne was expected

to do the same; and then to go to the piano until her relative's dry cough warned her that her desire for music had reached its allotted span.

"If she saw me break down," said the girl, with a cold amusement, "she would allow me fifteen minutes and then tell me to put up my handkerchief!" When the tears came, Anne took care that they should be shed in solitude.

"I'm surprised," said Miss Jane in her usual *non sequitur* way, "that that young man should never even have left a card upon me."

"What young man?" asked Anne.

Her heart had begun to beat quicker. She knew quite well who was meant. A hundred times she had told herself that least of all would she care now for that vain dream—a vain dream, what else was it, except a dull remorse?

"Lady Grizell's nephew. The young savage of the hills. The young man who dined here. He nursed the cat. Oh, my dear, don't look at me like that!" said the elder Miss Joscelyn impatiently. She very often felt impatient with the younger, who was not behaving up to her standard womanhood. Anne wanted bracing, in Miss Jane's opinion. And it was difficult to brace anyone who never seemed to hear what you said. "He dined here the night of your poor father's seizure. You can't have forgotten."

"I have not forgotten," said Anne. Oh, she wished she had. She wished she could. Why had he given no sign?

"I don't expect young men to come and see me, un-

less they want to," said Miss Jane, preening her faded, pretty, dark head, on its delicate throat. "But I do think he ought to have left a card. Grizell says, by the way, she hopes you'll come to tea, Anne. She would particularly like a long talk with you. I suppose you did want to hear her views when you were so anxious to meet her; though you turned so perverse. What's the matter?"

Anne had risen. Her portion of the small chicken cream, meticulously divided between them, untouched on her plate.

"I've got such a stupid headache!" said the girl at random. "I feel—faint. I must go to my room."

"Dear, dear," said Miss Jane, fussily getting up from her chair. She had a peculiar dislike to any manifestation of ill health; especially in her own household. One of her theories was that women had really, fostered by male duplicity, got into a habit of looking on themselves as weak creatures; whereas their constitutions, properly dealt with, were in reality as good as that of any man. It was lending themselves to the great conspiracy against woman's right place in the world to pander to these *petites santés* which were the curse of the sex, and man's chief weapon against it. "Look at me," she would say, "I never ail—why?" And then, with a little crisp laugh. "Because I won't ail. I know I needn't. And I don't, aha! I'm neither a doormat nor a sofa cushion."

It was always her tactics to rob any feminine "vapors" of their interesting halo, by downright suggestion.

"You would sit and moon the whole afternoon, instead of coming with me to the Queens Hall meeting. A little exercise would have done you good. And you would have had some food for thought. If you keep brooding like that——"

She broke off. Anne had walked out of the room. The little lady hesitated a moment whether she would follow her. She decided not. The less fuss made, the better. There was something baffling, not to say decidedly exasperating, in Anne's persistent absence of mind. "She doesn't mean to be rude," said Jane shrewdly. "She just really doesn't hear." So Miss Jane sat down again and finished her portion, down to the last fragment. Tinker, the cat, was regaled with Anne's plate.

Anne, locked in her bedroom, cast herself face downwards on the bed, and the long pent up tears broke out.

Was it that the recollection of that night, when she had been so frantically hopeful, so stirred, so happy, had been too poignantly evoked upon the blankness of her present life? Was it that, hidden away with her other frozen feelings, there had been all the time some pulse of hope which had never ceased beating? There is nothing more mysteriously varied in its perfidy than sorrow. It has a hundred different shades of pain. Real may seem false; and the false grip you with the cruelest reality. The atom takes shape as a mountain, and the mountain falls away as a molehill. He had not left a card; and he was gone. Now she knew indeed that she was an orphan, and poverty stricken;

that there was no prospect for her but the cold bread of charity. Now she knew that her old father had gone without a murmured blessing, without a look of love; and that her last act had been to deceive him. She wept for her own forlornness; and she wept for that stony-hearted creature who had sat by the old man's bedside and not shed a tear. She mourned her lost hopes and the fruitless passion of her foiled desires. She mourned the great home of her ancestors, and the shabby little room, that had been her own. But beyond and above everything, she lamented the lost illusion. Not a word!

They had parted on a lover's clasp; and there were words on his lips that might well have meant love's promise. Yet, not a sign, since! Was she only now to him, as to all her old friends, and all these bustling women who frequented her aunt, "the poor Miss Joscelyn?" Then she was poor indeed!

CHAPTER XIV

AUNT JANE had a qualification for ultimate success; she was persevering. Once she had thoroughly gripped hold of an idea, she was determined it would not be her fault if it were not carried out. She could scarcely be said to nag, for she merely voiced an opinion about twice a day. At the end of a week she would only have said it fourteen times: but there was something curiously driving in these dry taps, delivered always in the same manner, as with a mechanical measure.

It was on a Monday night that she first suggested to her niece that it would be advisable to arrange to go to tea with Lady Grizell. By Friday morning, Anne surrendered. Within ten minutes of this capitulation, the leading suffragette had been rung up on the telephone, and an appointment fixed for not later than four thirty that very afternoon.

"She's got a committee meeting at six. She is due to speak at the Flower Girls' Union this evening. So she hopes you'll be punctual. And if she should be a little late," proceeded Anne in her precise way, "you're to go straight in and wait. She has got to see two labor leaders in the Lobby at three thirty, and might be kept."

Anne suggested that it seemed rather a long day;

but her aunt quenched the feeble attempt at procrastination, with a nipping decision.

"Not at all. All her days are just the same. She's ready to give you an hour. What more can you want?"

The girl refrained from the obvious retort; and submitted to being sandwiched in between the activities of the notable lady.

Perhaps if the aunt had been less absorbed in affairs of public interest, and had possessed some talent for human observation, she might have noted that the niece was no longer the numb, listless creature of the first weeks. If Anne spoke as little, or seemed no more ready to be thrilled either by the monstrosity of woman's present position, or the glories of her state to come, she was, nevertheless, keenly alive once more; indeed abnormally so. A score of times, at every meal, a chance word of Miss Jane would fleer her like the touch of a lash. Her color would fluctuate at a look. There were times when only by setting her teeth could she keep tears from overflowing.

Jane, however, was not addicted to tiresome precautions for the sparing of other people's feelings; though, to do her justice, if she frankly expatiated on the necessary economies she would have to make, owing to Anne's permanent residence with her, it was not that she grudged her brother's child anything that she was in a position to give her. She would, on the contrary, have cheerfully denied herself for the orphan's sake. And the thought that anyone could entertain the idea that the girl's natural home was not with her, could not have entered her head.

But Anne was revolving many things in her mind. She most particularly did not wish, now, to visit Lady Grizell. The thought of Minniglen had become a pain, a humiliation; the prospect of hearing his name brought up, something to shrink from.

Nevertheless, in her new black, she was duly dropped at Lady Grizell's, five minutes before the half-hour. And she found herself sitting alone in a room where she was unable, it seemed to her, to remove herself from the eyes of the man she loved. A large photograph of Allan McClurg, strikingly like, stood on a little table opposite her chair. Under the shadowy brows, the eyes fixed her.

When the waves of emotion had subsided a little, she began to examine her surroundings.

Lady Grizell Kennedy's home, at the upper end of Charles Street, overlooking Chesterfield Gardens, was one of those unpretending yet dignified houses that present a small front to the street but hold delightful surprises in the way of space and noble dimensions at the back. From its inner square hall to its double, harmoniously proportioned Georgian drawing-room, it was a place eminently stamped with the traditions of old-fashioned gentry, of that quiet, solid, high-bred, British stock which, not necessarily titled, counts itself with truth of the best blood in the world.

As she sat in this sparsely furnished, pleasant airy apartment, waiting for her hostess's return, Anne found herself surrounded with things that appealed to her; with things that perhaps no one was more qualified keenly to appreciate than she. The golden, tortoise-

shell-hued lacquer cabinet, they had had one like it at Joscelyn Court; the Buhl writing table, the bow-shaped chest of drawers; the Empire sofa before the log fire; the spring bulbs, filling the place with perfume, some in the *cloisonné* jardiniere, some in warm tinted Italian pottery; the few pictures on the white paneled walls; things a century old, and things of today, but all in harmony.

Here was no millionaire's state room, set in one priceless period at the expense of a colossal cheque. Here was what had grown with generations. There was little studied coherence, yet, withal, delicate concord. Even the modern water color which held a panel, opposite an adornable *primitif* of the Siennese school, struck no false note. Anyone who had not the soul of an upholsterer would have understood that as the owner of this room sat in her armchair it was a joy to her to be able to turn her gaze from the tender Madonna, dim yet so rich in her curveting frame—memorial, no doubt, of some entrancing Italian travel—to that other impression: the desolate, infinitely poetic Scottish moorland which had been her childhood's home.

When Anne's eyes fell upon the moorland sketch, the emotion that she was striving to avoid rushed back upon her. She had never seen the actual glen where she had been lost and found, but she had known its sister glens and hills. When she had heard him cry, with that voice that comes from the heart—my own hills—the place of mists had become colored for her in all its exquisite, austere mystery, as if, at the moment, her eyes had been opened upon it. A hundred times,

since, she had imagined it; the shrine, the sacred place where he and she would forever stand together, apart from the world, in her memory. She had determined to forget; and here a few strokes from a cunning brush had brought it all back, with a rush that was overpowering.

She got up, drawn by an irresistible impulse, and went to stand before the picture. A voice awoke and called within her: "No, you will never forget, and you will never find again." And it came upon her, with a pang that rent, a physical anguish, that indeed, when she had met Minniglen again, she had not found that which she sought. Was it possible that much had really been of her own creation; that, half delirious from exhaustion, the outer and inner conflicts, she had placed her kindly helper upon some impossible pedestal? Had the wanderings of her mind evolved a mere dream personality?

Her most vivid recollections seemed to wither away beneath the doubt. All that she had so long hung upon as solid fact, had become in time first blurred, and then intangible. The man of the mists, a wraith, overlapped, lost in the virile, boyish personality of the man of the railway station, the man of Aunt Jane's dinner party. And yet they were the same. Reason asserted itself. She was not mad; she was not under a monstrous delusion. The face she had seen by the light of the match in the shepherd's hut, the face that had looked at her wonderingly across the railway lines, the face that had greeted her as she crossed the threshold of the little sitting room in Aunt Jane's flat, were

one and the same. Lines of Browning floated into her mind. A man

> Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with,
> One to show a woman when he loves her.

Because of strange circumstances, she had had a glimpse of a man's soul, which he would never again show to any but the woman he loved. And Anne told herself the folly had been in her, who had thought—on what insubstantial ground—that she was loved! She knew better now: Minniglen, aware of her sorrow, had gone back to his Highlands, without a word.

She had reached this conclusion when Lady Grizell entered the room.

It was the first warmly human grasp that Anne had felt since her bereavement, when Lady Grizell took both her hands, and held them. The girl was glad that the elder woman did not speak for a while; she felt her lips quiver, and it took all her strength to drive the tears back from her eyes. Miss Jane's attitude towards grief was of severe common sense. When things could not be helped, it was weakness to lament. And "weakness" in her sex she deemed, "the sin against the Holy Ghost, for which there is no forgiveness." To enter into her chirrupy presence was, to Anne, of itself a styptic. Now she thought how comforting it might be to fling herself upon another woman's shoulder and, like a child, have her cry out.

When Lady Grizell had placed her visitor in a deep armchair she rang, and tea was immediately brought. Absorbed, apparently, in the feminine task of brewing

it, she had only perfunctory phrases for her visitor. Anne felt the lump in her throat, the physical pain of denied tears, subside; and she was able to speak naturally on the trifles, the everyday inquiries addressed to her.

Lady Grizell showed in the day time the same old clinging to the fashions of her youth as in the evening. The mantle she had cast upon the chair, the black silk dress, flowing in the skirts, buttoned to the chin where the small point lace collar was fastened with a cameo brooch, the hat of black, fine straw, with its fall of black lace at the back—all she wore was what her own mother might have worn when she herself was eighteen. An atmosphere of gentle Victorian breeding surrounded her. And the contrast between the appearance of the lady and her advanced opinions, was the extreme of quaintness.

Presently, when the second cup of delicious Caravan tea had been taken, the hostess led her guest to the Empire sofa, facing the fire; and, while the afternoon mellowed to warm gold about them, she conversed, without any apparent consideration for the flight of time and her own much talked of engagements, in a restful manner, which the girl, accustomed to her aunt's fussiness, found singularly soothing. Lady Grizell spoke of herself in an intimate way which, more subtly than a caress, made the visitor feel she was liked.

She had been left a young widow, she told Anne: childless, and she had found that the only possible way to live at all was to work.

"I was drifting into a kind of melancholia," she said,

"when I suddenly stood still, as it were, and faced myself. 'You miserable, puling thing,' thought I, 'here you are, afflicted, it is true, alone in the world, solitary. But with all that money can give you, and all that the beauty of the world can tempt you with, you have not to take a thought as to what is to become of you, nor how you are to meet the future. It is all mapped out for you in luxury, in comfort. Think of the thousands and thousands of widows, their breadwinner gone, left desolate to face the unnamable cruelties of life as best they can—those who have not time to cry. True you have no children,' I said to myself, 'what of those who see their children starve?' I took up work in the poorer parts of London—with a special view for the widows. And then," said Lady Grizell, with a bright, unexpected smile, "then I grew into what they now call a suffragette. I defy anyone to make investigations on the lines I took, and not see—" she broke off. "You are not listening."

Her green, prominent eyes were fixed intently upon Anne. And the girl was saying to herself that the profound, luminous, mystic gaze which she associated with Minniglen must be a McClurg characteristic. Certainly if the late Lady Magdalen had resembled her sister Grizell, the son had not taken after the mother.

She now started, and blushed violently. But though her thoughts had wandered, she had heard; and she had understood. Allan McClurg did not approve of his relative's views. He had made that sufficiently clear. Yet the voice that had spoken to her in the glen, and

the voice that had deepened over the sufferings of her sex, were surely attuned.

"No, I don't want to turn you into a suffragette," her hostess went on. "You're not the make of one. And there are many reasons. But I want you to understand that there are other sides to the question, than banners and processions and the outrages of notoriety seekers. Some day I will take you on one of my rounds; for you and I have got to be great friends. That is," she said, leaning forward with an air of courtesy that was singularly graceful from a woman of her years and standing towards a penniless girl, "that is if you will allow me the privilege."

"Oh," said Anne; and, words failing her, put out her hand.

The elder woman took it into that grasp which was of itself comfort, and as she held it said—as if to change the subject:

"You met my nephew before our little dinner at Jane's, didn't you?"

The color rushed to Anne's face; this time so overpoweringly that Lady Grizell, releasing her, with an exclamation that they were letting the fire out, got up and put a log on the hearth.

Anne felt in that critical rather blasé corner of her mind which ten years of social life had fostered, that Lady Grizell's tact was after all not quite perfect; since it was here so obvious. Nevertheless she was grateful. Behind her hostess's back, she was able to answer steadily, though the fire still burned in each cheek:

"Yes, we met—and knew each other again, without knowing each other's names."

"So I gathered," said Lady Grizell, sailing back to her chair with a rustle of silk skirts. "When I said to you just now, that I was alone in the world," she went on with an emotion that had been lacking even to the expansive tones of a while ago, "I spoke like an ungrateful woman. I am not alone. My nephew is to me all that a son could have been. And more. My life is rich in affection, so long as I have his."

There was nothing Anne could answer; but, fortunately, Lady Grizell was quite content to be listened to.

"He is a most precious boy," she said, and then laughed. "The oddest creature! But no one in the world knows, but me, what there lies behind his dear blunt ways."

Anne's lips were parted; not only because she was drinking in words that seemed to be filling all those inner springs which, scarcely half an hour ago, she had thought to have been wasted in one vain gush and dried for ever, but also because her breath was coming quickly. Ah, one other knew what lay behind Minniglen's boyish ruggedness.

"Always," Lady Grizell was saying, "from the time he was quite a little boy, he was unlike anyone else. Quaint imp, with his red head all over curls! He had a way of trudging off by himself and getting into unheard of mischief, and coming back so dear, so torn and dirty. The independence of him! The things he used to say! I remember once,—he could not have

been more than five then—I was cuddling him on my knee, and I called him my lamb: as I told you, he is all the child I ever had. And he looked at me, jerking up his carroty crop and fixing those curious eyes of his on me. They are curious eyes. I don't know if you have noticed? McClurg's eyes, the 'eyes that see,' as they say up there. Well: he looked at me, and he said, in his solemn way: 'You mustn't call me a lamb. Lamb means a little sheep. We McClurgs'—yes, indeed, that's what he said—'we McClurgs,'—the pride of the creature already!—'We McClurgs are not sheep, we are the deer of the forest.' Wasn't it delicious? 'You're the dear of your old aunt,' said I. And, another time, he must have been about nine then, he had had an awful tumble on the crags, and he came in with a cut on his head and bleeding knees, whistling. When I had bound him up, I tried to make him promise to take more care of himself. 'Promise me not to go climbing about everywhere, and making for every danger, just for the fun of it,' I said. 'You'll be killed.' He stood facing me with the white bandage round his curly pate, and his chin thrust out. He never was, I suppose, what you would call a beautiful child; but it was always a splendid face. 'Aunt Grizell,' he said, in his sententious way, 'I'd rather break my neck any day, than walk about taking care of myself.' After that what was one to do?"

"Oh," said Anne, "you could not want to tame that spirit."

"I could not, even if I wanted to. I might as well have tried to tame the moors of Minniglen. You should

see him in his own place, up in his hills, to understand him. He is like them. He is part of them—wild, poetic, untamable and unsullied. He'll do the most out-of-the-way kindnesses, and his only wish is that no one should find out who did them. You should see him among his own, to understand a little bit of my boy," said Lady Grizell proudly. And then, turning once again upon the visitor: "No doubt you will. At least I hope you will," she added.

Before Anne could collect her thoughts, upon the unexpected phrase, the lady's eye escaped to the clock.

"My dear Miss Joscelyn, I don't want to send you away; but I am due in Mile End in half an hour."

She shook hands pleasantly; but in an impersonal way, as if Anne, in this hour of business, had suddenly lost her special identity.

Had the girl been in a condition to reflect philosophically upon her hostess's character, she might have already realized that Lady Grizell was of those who keep their natural affections, and their intellectual activities, in separate compartments, so comfortably that there is no possibility of their clashing.

She walked slowly back to the Mansions, taking a round-about alley of the Green Park. She knew she would be late for her aunt's dinner hour; but she must have a little breathing space for her mind, in which to taste the full flavor of the new airs that had now blown in upon her stagnant hopelessness. The man she liked to call by the territorial name that had, from the first, struck in her some secret chord of romance—Minniglen—must have talked about her in some

very special way,—there could be no explanation but one. "I do not want to make a suffragette of you—for many reasons." This from the woman who had looked upon her with such distant eyes when she had declared herself a defender of old-fashioned views concerning womanhood, who had flung at her the slighting, the almost offending, phrase: "You prefer wheedling."

Anne understood. Lady Grizell, to the world, the determined champion of woman's rights, was in her private life the mere slave of her natural affection for her nephew. And he,—he had looked on Anne and found something in her to fill his thoughts, to make him want to see her again. Oh, at the very least, it was that! Lady Grizell's advances left no doubt.

When the lift shot her up to the seventh floor, she found that, in spite of admonitions, she was late for dinner. Miss Jane had had her fillet of sole, and her quail. Anne's portions were being nursed upon the *rechaud*—which as a rule was only used for breakfast.

"I have had it brought in," said Miss Jane severely, and gave an angry dry chuckle, like an annoyed bird. "And I am sure your quail can't be eatable. It is only nice when straight from the fire. I don't think you ought to have stayed on, my dear. Grizell is a busy woman. You'll have to learn how to live with busy women. Oh, you didn't stay. You walked. Oh,—you mooned along, you mean. Well, never mind. You'll have to help yourself now. Jenny's washing up. And I must have my rest.— By the way." Miss Jane turned back on the threshold; "I have had a visitor. He came for you, really. But he asked for Miss Joscelyn,

and Jenny showed him in to me. I've invited him to tea tomorrow, and promised you'd be in then. He's quite a nice young man, but he's got rather a ridiculous name." Jane giggled. "His name is——"

"Sidney Hanks!" interrupted Anne in a tone that was nearly a groan.

"Ha!" said her relative, contemplating her a moment.

The elder Miss Joscelyn's eyes were of a kind not often seen in an English countenance: of a brown so nearly black that its opacity baffled interpretation. She now surveyed her niece with a distinctly emphatic gaze. Anne, feeling herself blush, exclaimed impatiently:

"Why did you ask him for tea? I don't want to see him."

Whereupon Miss Jane said tartly:

"Don't be silly," and disappeared.

CHAPTER XV

ANNE had learned that she must conform to her aunt's household regulations; or else, while enjoying her hospitality, forgo all possibility of comfort. Jane Joscelyn was of those who impose their will remorselessly in small matters. Anne would, against her own peculiar code of honor, have given her reasons for desiring not to meet Mr. Hanks, but she had a positive dread of her aunt adopting her dead brother's view of the matter, and exercising pressure upon her.

"If," said the little spinster, discussing her special minute brown sausage at breakfast the next morning, "if I could see any disposition upon your part to take up life seriously, I would not say a word. If you were ready to do your woman's work in the world, God knows I would not put a stone in your path. If you were like so many of our earnest helpers, and disliked men, I'd understand. I don't dislike men, myself, I pity them. But I understand other people disliking them. There are a lot of bad men. And they do a lot of harm. They've been badly brought up. They haven't been curbed. They've been pandered to," said the suffragette and slapped the table with a very small hand. "But you don't hate men. You like them. You've always liked them—dancing with them, and talking with them, and flirting with them. Aha! Yes, my

dear girl, you couldn't help flirting,—even with that poor stupid Highland boy, that savage of the glen, who nursed Tinker. I've made up my mind," pursued Miss Jane, "that I can't have you mooning away your days like this. If you want to be a butterfly, you shall be a butterfly. I should prefer you to be a bee. I'm a bee. But it can't be helped; you're a butterfly. Yes, I know you're in mourning. I'm not asking you to go to balls. But there's no disrespect to the dead in seeing your friends."

"May not a poor butterfly rest?" asked Anne with a weary smile.

"Rest? I don't mind your resting. I wish you would. You never do rest. You rove about life," said Aunt Jane in a burst of poetic fancy, "like the wind in a wood. There won't be anything left of you, except sighs, if this goes on. I've asked Mr. Hanks to tea. And ordered scones. He's your friend, not mine. Hanks, what a name! He can't help that, though. I've seen worse young men. You will kindly stay at home. You want to rest—and have tea with him. Now I've got to go to the flower shop assistant guild at a quarter to six. And I must lie down fifteen minutes first."

Anne gave a gasp. Miss Jane shut her mouth with a little snap, as if there was no more to be said. There *was* no more to be said.

To do her inconveniently managing relative justice, however, Anne was obliged to acknowledge that she contrived to take off most of the initial awkwardness of Mr. Hank's entrance, by her perfectly detached yet

amiable manner of receiving him, when that gentleman duly put in his appearance the next day.

"How de do. No, you're not late. As a matter of fact you're three minutes before time. That's all right. You know my niece. Anne, dear, Mr. Hanks. Yes, that chair will do quite well. Draw it near the table. Sit down, Anne. Sit down, Mr. Hanks. What will you have? I never give more than three things for tea. Toast, scones and bread-and-butter. I don't have sandwiches. And I don't have what I call station cakes, aha! Bread-and-butter, toast, scones. Take what you like. Try them all if you like. Anne, pass the cream to Mr. Hanks."

"Oh, thank you!" cried Sidney. He had said it in every brief pause of Miss Jane's talk. As his hostess handed him one plate after another, he helped himself docilely from each. Then he turned to Anne:

"I've been wanting to come and see you, most awfully, ever since—ever since the opera, you know."

Before the younger woman could reply, the elder hopped into the conversation in her neat, bird-like way.

"Oh, indeed. Did you meet my niece at the opera? Are you fond of music?"

"I like a good musical comedy," answered Sidney. He spoke with all the politeness demanded of him. Anne, who had known him either abjectly amorous, or particularly free and easy, might have been amused at his anxious attentiveness to her aunt, had circumstances been different. But she could not be amused. She was too uncomfortably forecasting the moment when that lady would arise and leave them alone, and the inevi-

table consequences of what must seem an obviously afforded opportunity.

When Jane started to inveigh against the whole institution of *revues* and musical comedy, as the most demoralizing factor in the social life of the day, Anne, who would have hated it at any other time, hailed the subject with a secret enthusiasm, hoping that the discussion might be prolonged.

"Horrid, nasty kind of amusement!" said Miss Jane. The spot of carnation which was the only sign of emotion, appeared on the olive pallor of each cheek. "It was invented to pander to man's lowest instincts."

"Oh, I say!" cried Sidney, opening his eyes very round.

"Why do you like musical comedy, will you tell me?" asked Miss Jane severely.

Sidney looked amused.

"Jolly catchy tunes—you know, what? And a lot of pretty girls to look at. Pretty dresses, you know, I mean."

He broke off and cast a scared look, poor enamored youth, at Anne's half averted face. He hoped she would not think he was that kind of fellow. What a ninny he had been to talk of musical comedy.

"Dress you call it—ha!" said Miss Jane with a snort.

"Of course," said young Hanks, too preoccupied about any possible misunderstanding on the part of the object of his affection to follow the road of argument along which Miss Jane was pacing with small determined feet. "Of course, for real serious amuse-

ment—oh, I say, you know what I mean. I wouldn't compare any musical comedy with a high class show like Parsifal, the other night. Ripping! I did enjoy that! Top hole, what! I'm jolly bad at expressing myself, but the kind of thing a fellow won't forget in a hurry. By Jove, I shan't forget Parsifal in a hurry."

His gaze, as if moved by mechanism, slid round again to rest on Anne. She lifted her eyes and looked at him.

"By George," he was thinking, "what have they done to her?"

She was as white as ivory, in her black. He thought, in the fatuous, yet fervent impulse of his mind towards her, that she was more rare and beautiful each time he saw her. As inarticulate of mind, almost, as he was of speech, he was nevertheless once more indefinably yet vividly struck by her fineness, her delicateness; her extraordinary breeding; the whiteness of her throat and cheek, against the black of her open collar and the darkness of her wavy hair; the grave aloofness of her eyes, the serious curve of her folded lips; her silence, her repose! It all appealed to some instinct—perhaps an inherited instinct of servility,—and roused an admiration far beyond anything that the free and easy, sparkling, rosy, ogling, forthcoming charm of Lady Penelope could ever awake in him. If he had been asked to define his sentiment, it would have run into some such wording: "Pen makes herself a sight too cheap! This one holds her head up. She is the high bred sort, if ever I saw it. You couldn't miss her for that, not at forty-yards!"

Anne, while she looked at him, was away on one of those flights of thought peculiar to the woman who loves. Allan McClurg had told her he hated Parsifal—hated it because not even a church could be sacred enough to hold such sacred emotions. To him it had been the desecration of the Holy of Holies. The most eloquent dissertation could not have more clearly shown the sway of faith in his soul, his simple reverent Christian belief. But Sidney Hanks dubbed it a high class show—Ripping! And declared it an evening not to forget in a hurry because on it he had met her, Anne!

Both Lord Weyford and his heir, had had, Anne remembered, a manner of referring to a young man's affection for a particular girl, by saying he was "sweet on her." She had now a faint shudder: Sidney liked Parsifal because he was sweet on Anne.

"Ha—you can't answer that," said Miss Jane. The eyes of the two young people shot towards her with a guilty precipitancy. Neither had heard what the suffragette had been saying.

"Oh, I say!" objurgated Sidney, with a wriggle, and a general air of feeling that he was getting out of an awkward situation with wit and humor: "Don't be too hard on us. A fellow can't help being born a man, can he?"

"Dear me, no," said Miss Jane, compassionately. "How silly! But he can help a good many other things. I'll give you a little book. You'll find it in the hall. And now I must be going. I have an engagement. Dear me, no. You needn't go. Anne will

give you another cup of tea, if you want it. Are you aware that you've got a scone, and bread and butter, and a piece of toast, on your plate? Good-by. You'll come and tell me what you think of that pamphlet. I'll tell Jenny to leave it in the hall.—What's that, Anne? What nonsense! I couldn't possibly bring you with me. It's a committee meeting."

As the young man came back to his chair, after opening the door for Miss Jane, Anne felt that she had only made matters infinitely worse by her half-conscious appeal.

That he now knew she attached significance to the situation was obvious by the expression of his countenance. His eyes as he fixed her, had not the doggish pleading that she had found pitiful; but a certain manly, almost masterful determination. She plunged into speech, in the futile effort to postpone if not avert, the evil hour.

"Are you ready for that second cup of tea? I expect you really don't like tea. How are you all at home? How is Lady Weyford, and Miss Bradles? And——"

As a boy will knock down a whole row of skittles, in a single throw, Sidney laid all her inept barriers low:

"Look here, Miss Joscelyn, I have not come here to talk about this kind of thing. I—hang it, you can't say I've not been a patient chap! You can't say I've not been faithful. I am faithful. I'll always be faithful. I——"

"Mr. Hanks——"

"Anne—hadn't you better hear what I've got to say first? Now look here, I know what I am not. But I

know what I am. I'm not up to you. I'm not one of those fellows with a hundred names behind him in the Peerage or the Landed Gentry—however the pater or the mater may go on. I'm just the son of a man that worked his way up in the world, and of a jolly good woman who has gone up with him. Stop now, I haven't done. And I'm not brainy either. I ain't dead stuck on books and pictures and high art, and all the rest of it. I like a bit of sport, and I like a bit of fun.—Just you hear me out! Maybe I'm as good a man as any of your born swells. I—I tell you what—maybe I'm better. It's not to blow my own trumpet, but I see a good deal of that kind of fellow, first and last. And I shouldn't be saying much for myself, if I said I was a sight better than many of them. A precious lot they are. Oh, I know what you're going to say. You don't love me. I know you don't. And that's perhaps why I love you so much. There's hardly a girl in London that is not ready to love me this moment—me or my money. Ah, you think I oughtn't to say that. Well, I can't be mincing gentlemanly tosh when it's my whole life is at stake! Mine and yours. You don't love me. But I'd not be afraid to marry you on that account; you'd get to know, and jolly soon, that I'm not a bounder. I say," cried Sidney Hanks, thumping his knee with his clenched hand, "I say I'm not a bounder! There isn't a thought in my heart about you that I wouldn't be proud to show you. Couldn't you think of it? I don't ask you to answer me now, but couldn't you think of it? You can't want to go on living here, with that queer old lady. You're alone in the

world, up in this pocket of a place. Good God, this is not a life for you. You're made to be a duchess. I'll make you better than any duchess. I daresay you think a title and all that kind of thing is jolly absurd for people like us. I think so myself—and all the mater's coronets about fair turn me sick, and I've got to go out with the dogs and try and forget 'em! But, by Jove, a coronet on you! It would fit—it would fit you as—as—" he hesitated and then love struck poetry out of him as the steel strikes fire from the flint—"It would fit you, you'd wear it like a flower! And there's nothing that money can give you—that money can give you—" he repeated hoarsely, and paused, strangling.

The tears had welled into Anne's eyes, and were rolling down her cheeks. She lifted her hand to silence him but he went on, and she saw, more clearly with every successive word, that in saying he was not a bounder in his heart, he had spoken only the truth.

"It's not that I'd ever think that any money—" Again he paused and changed the venue—"I mean money is no price for such as you: But if it wasn't for the money, hang it all, I'd never dare speak! It's there to back me up, in a way; but it ain't anything to me unless you like me to spend it on you. It's a home—a home, I'm offering you, and you haven't got one. A home—my home! And you're the only woman that can make it for me. You've got no end of a kind heart; a fellow has only to look at you to see that. Is it nothing to you to have the happiness of a poor devil in your hands? A poor devil!"

He sprang to his feet. She saw that, on a high pitch

of emotion, he swayed between the impulses to fall on his knees, or to dash from the room. She understood two things quite well. The first was that if it had not been for yesterday's visit to Lady Grizell, she would now say "yes" to Sidney Hanks. The second was that it would be infamous to let him go away with a false hope.

"I am sorry," she said, and the effort with which she spoke gave a harshness to her voice which she was far from feeling.

Even the dullest lover will have an intuition.

"Then there's someone else!" he cried, with a kind of fury that sprang only from despair.

"You have no right to say that," Anne braced herself in pride. Fools rush in, indeed—!

"There is, there is," he insisted. "There is someone! You're engaged, perhaps! Someone you love, then?"

"No," she said. And "no" again. And then the sincerity of his suffering forced truth from her: at least she owed him that. "Only a dream."

With a sound that was between a scoffing laugh and a sob, he flung himself away, groped blindly for his hat. And, as he stamped out of the room, she heard him mutter brokenly that by George he'd shoot himself if it was not for the old mater!

The door slammed and then the outer door. The whole little installation shook with the tornado of the poor youth's thwarted passion.

She sat down on the window seat, and began to cry. She was so sorry; so awfully sorry to have hurt anyone so much! When her handkerchief was quite soaked through, she made a pad of it and mopped her eyes;

then spread it out to dry, with a whimsical thought that she must wait awhile before shedding any more tears. She felt so tired, all at once, that she could not direct her thoughts; and they floated in and out, without sequence. Poor Sidney Hanks! How much she wished he had been able to engage himself to Pen, as Cordelia Brooksbury had suggested. Of course Cordelia had only said that because she thought it would vex her. Not one of them understood at all. Every woman in her own set really believed that she wanted to marry Sidney Hanks. If they knew the truth, what a fool they would think her! Perhaps she was a fool? Certainly she was. All that the world could give her, all that wealth could buy; and—what was it he had said?—a home. There was nothing, nothing she could not hold her hand out to, if once she had Sidney Hanks' wedding ring on it. A little boy, with red curls, had said: "I am not a lamb—a lamb is a little sheep. We McClurgs are the wild deer of the hills."

She felt like that unknown yet infinitely beloved child! No, she had been with the free deer, out on the untrodden ways, she could not pasture in peace and plenty with the sheep.

"Dear, dear," said Miss Jane, entering an hour later, "that tiresome young man has never taken his pamphlet. Good gracious, Anne, what are you doing—sitting in the window, like that? Mooning, as usual, I needn't ask. Why didn't you remind Mr. Hanks of the book? I particularly wished to talk it over with him on

his next visit—what's his address? I'll have it posted tonight."

Anne looked at the publication: "*The Tyranny of Man. The Subjection of Woman: How to cure these two great Diseases of Humanity*, by Jane Joscelyn." She had been requested to study it herself; and in turning its pages over, had forlornly thought what inextinguishable laughter they would have caused her—two months ago. Jane's writing was quaintly like Jane's talk: all in little crisp sentences, deliciously unattached one to the other, like the hopping traces of a bird in the snow—and as little likely to leave any mark on the earth's surface.

"It is not the least use your sending anything to Mr. Hanks," said the girl. "He certainly never will come here again."

Miss Joscelyn, aunt, gazed on Miss Joscelyn, niece, for a second or two in silence; and then said, in accents of disapproval which were more due to unacknowledged disappointment than to the shortcomings she was rebuking:

"I don't think I've ever met anyone quite so tiresome as you are! Not only do you let everything slip, but you would like other people to do the same! I'm sure I'm glad I never have had to trust you with anything for the Cause. You certainly would be a broken reed." She pressed the electric button as she spoke. "Jenny will look up Mr. Hanks' card for me. I'm not one to withdraw my hand from the plow."

CHAPTER XVI

TOWARDS the beginning of July, Miss Joscelyn the elder began to make summer plans. They were of an energetic description.

"My dear," she said to Anne, "nobody knows whether Ulster and the rest of Ireland are going to fight or not. But everyone says that, whatever happens, we shall have Home Rule there. Now that means new laws. It's most important that Ireland should be taught, educated to understand the proper position of woman. If laws are to be made, new laws, women," said Jane slapping the table with her favorite gesture, "must help to make them. I hear the most shocking accounts of Ireland. Ireland is quite a century behind the age; if not more, Eastern. Positively Eastern. When I tell you that the peasant women call their husbands the master —yes, my dear, the master!—and actually walk a step behind them as if they were not worthy to go beside the creatures; and that an Irish husband, of the poorer classes, will make his wife take off his boots—his boots! well, I'm sure it's no wonder Ireland is in the state she is. I see my duty," asserted Jane, when she deemed that this terrible indictment had had time to sink in. "It's very unpleasant. I don't like it at all. But I've got to make a tour in Ireland, and wake up the Irish women. I've got to teach them the gospel of their womanhood. Now what are you going to do?"

Anne looked at her relative with startled eyes.

"I don't think there's the least use in your coming over with me," proceeded the self-denying spinster. "You wouldn't be any help. And it would be needless expense."

Anne quite agreed.

"You might go on a few visits," said the elder, tentatively.

Anne's lips quivered.

"I don't think anybody wants me, now."

Indeed Cordelia, the Weyfords, the Duchess and Pen, all her old habituês, had melted from her, these months. Aunt Jane, however, was not given to pandering to useless sentiment.

"Nonsense, child. Your father's only just dead. How could people be asking you to parties? Anyone, if you'll only let them know, would be delighted to have you in the country."

Anne got up, and walked out of the room. She had taken a sudden resolution.

Half an hour later, she was ringing the bell at Lady Grizell's door. Osborn, the butler, gave her a confidential smile. He knew, with the instinct of the old servant, who was a welcome visitor, and who not. The pretty, pale girl had already been discriminated, in the housekeeper's room, as one of your "real ladies," someone very different from the strange beings whom it was too often Osborn's painful duty to admit to his misguided mistress. Yes, her ladyship was at home. He did not think she was engaged, at least not particu-

lar, so to speak. At any rate, he was quite sure her ladyship would be delighted to see Miss Joscelyn.

When she entered the drawing-room already so familiar to her, Anne appreciated, as perhaps never before, the advantages of a house as compared to a flat. On this hot day the windows over the garden were wide open, shaded by green awnings. There was a dim diffused light which in itself was a coolness. Lady Grizell, in a striped black and white cambric Garibaldi, and a flowing skirt of the thinnest black glacê silk; a dab of white lace centered with a small black velvet bow irrelevantly poised on the parting of her sandy hair, looked the very image of ease and restfulness, as she rose from her writing table to greet her visitor.

It was, Anne thought, truly delightful of her hostess to ask straight away: "Now, what can I do for you?" She could state her purpose without preliminary flounderings:

"You said, the other day, that the only way to face life is to work. I want to earn my own living. How can I set about it?"

It was not often that Lady Grizell showed surprise. She did so now.

"My dear child—" she exclaimed. Then her eye ran over Anne, from the brim of the wide black straw hat to the tip of the slim shoe. Anne's mourning was new; and, as Sidney Hanks had marked, it suited her. In her narrow black chiffon frock, she looked, perhaps more than ever, of those who are "born neither to toil nor to spin," but just to be clothed in beauty like the lilies in the field.

Some such thought crossed Lady Grizell's mind, apparently; for she said, drawing the girl down on the sofa beside her:

"I never saw anyone less qualified to ask such a question."

The affectionate smile that hovered on her lips; the tone in which she spoke, made of the words almost a caress. Anne went on stonily:

"I have got to do something. I cannot go on like this any more."

"Dear me!" said Lady Grizell. And the fervent advocate of feminine independence gave a laugh.

Anne bit her lip. The other went on, with the same air of tender banter:

"I daresay Jane is trying. I could not live a week with her, myself."

"Aunt Jane is very kind," said Anne loyally. "But I can't help seeing that I interfere with her plans, her work, considerably. And—may I tell you everything? I have only a hundred a year to live on. I must pay Aunt Jane something; at least half. That leaves me, well, it is not a very difficult sum, and I have not paid my mourning yet."

The quiet understanding sympathy with which the listener received her confidence made Anne's overburdened soul already feel relieved. She went on, with a sense of lessening tragedy:

"There's the summer. Aunt Jane wants me to go and visit. Oh, Lady Grizell, I couldn't be handed about like a packet, be fitted in between two parties, taken in on sufferance. Oh, you know—like poor old Mrs. Ar-

buthnot, or Winnie Mills—I couldn't play waltzes and accompany songs, and price the things for bazaars, and go in to dinner with the curate to make myself useful for my keep."

Lady Grizell laughed again.

"I suppose," she said, mocking with an undercurrent of seriousness, "that you really want me to recommend you as a suitable companion to an old lady. A young person who clings to bygone theories as you do can have no other opening, can she? Companion to an old lady. Have you thought what that means? It is a genteel hell. You are expected to be a combination of drudge, hospital nurse, *souffre-douleur*, secretary and sprightly conversationalist. You must take the fat dog out walking, and pick up dropped stitches; go out of the room discreetly when visitors come. You must breathe as well as you can with every window and door tight shut. You——"

"Oh, stop, stop!"

"And you have not a minute you can call your own, for twenty-four pounds a year, and perhaps your washing. No. I don't mean to be cruel. I couldn't resist pointing my little moral to the girl who thought that woman can get whatever she wants with a smile. But, to leave the general, to come to the personal: will you trust me to find work for you? Work that you are fitted for, that you can do better than any one I know of? Work that will bring you happiness? I want you to be happy, my dear"—her voice took a quality of softness that Anne had never heard in it hitherto, except when that nephew came into question.

"Will you trust me? It may take a little time; but—" she stopped, looked at Anne with her prominent green eyes; and the twinkle of humor was not absent from them. "No one, in an uncertain world, can promise certainty; but my plan for you is worth waiting for. Will you wait?"

There was a turmoil, a swirl, as it were, of doubtful clouds, shot with unbelievable lights, in Anne's mind. She resolutely barred shutters against them.

"Will you tell me nothing about what the work is likely to be?" she asked, after a pause, in a low voice.

"Oh yes, if you wish," said the other easily.

But here she paused; and Anne went on, angry with herself for the blush she felt rising.

"I might be studying, preparing——"

"An excellent idea," her companion assured her. Then, fun glinting in every line of her pleasant face, she said: "My idea for you is something open air, country. Why not study gardening? Gardening in all its branches. Delightful work. We'll go to Kew together. But I've no more time today. I must send you away, now."

She kissed Anne, and held her a moment by both shoulders. They were tall women, and their mutual gaze was nearly on a level. But Anne felt as if her kind friend was talking down to her, like one addressing an unreasonable beloved child when she added:

"It's settled then. You will go back and be patient, and put up with Jane's fidgets; and trust me to get you the right kind of work."

"Meanwhile I'll study market gardening. That is a good idea, could not I be a market gardener?"

"Why couldn't you, indeed," smiled Lady Grizell and pushed her gently towards the door.

Anne tried in vain to shut her ears against the little song of intolerable sweetness that was chanting within her all the way home.

She told Miss Jane, over lamb cutlets and peas, that she was going to be a market gardener. And the elder Miss Joscelyn enthusiastically approved; even to the extent of promising a thousand pounds—"as an investment, Anne. An investment. You'll have to pay me five per cent. I like helping, but I've no patience with sloppy, unbusinesslike arrangements. I'll get all my vegetables from you. And when I want a little change, I'll come and stay with you. As a paying guest, aha!"

These plans afforded delightful conversation to Jane all the rest of the week. Not only did they expand so as to picture Anne as self-supporting, but also as a large employer of woman labor. And to such development there was only one possible conclusion: Anne would want the vote; she would see the pressing, inevitable necessity of female suffrage.

About this time strange Hibernian ladies began to put in an appearance in Miss Jane Joscelyn's flat. Anne did not know whether she were more struck by their divergencies in manner and aspect, or by the singular unanimity of their opinions. There were fat females, and gaunt, elderly and young, forbidding, and irrepressibly gushing. Most of them broke out into

green, somewhere, in their toilet; and spoke of England with blighting ferocity. This attitude, Jane Joscelyn, however she might agree upon other points, severely reprobated.

"My dear," she would say to Anne, rather haggard and flushed after a strenuous day, "they are good women. Earnest women. I have the greatest respect for them. But I do wish they would not talk that stuff and nonsense. About England, I mean. About tyrants and bloody persecution. When we all know that the government won't say boo to a goose so long as it is a Nationalist goose. And poor Ulster may go to the wall."

"Are there no Ulster suffragettes?" asked Anne languidly. She thought it would be a refreshing change.

"My dear, so tiresome! They're all taken up with getting ready to nurse the men. Sometimes I think," said the lady, spreading out her energetic little hand, after the star-fish fashion she affected, and thumping the arm of her chair, "I think those men, those men who call themselves our rulers, are fostering civil war in Ireland just to get out of giving us the vote that was promised to us. Oh, you may laugh, Anne. But the fact is they don't know how to deal with the militants. I don't approve of militants. But they have beaten the man-made government, aha!"

The next day Miss Honoria O'Gorman Feeny came to lunch, straight from a glorious incarceration, where she had gone on hunger strike; been forcibly fed; and, in spite of the efforts of four female warders, had con-

trived to kick the doctor in the stomach. Her sentence had been of three months: she had been released in ten days. Accompanied by an adoring friend, she appeared, considerably before time, at Miss Jane's apartment. And, as this well-regulated lady was engaged upon her constitutional fifteen minutes in the Green Park, Anne, who was in her bedroom, thought she had better go into the drawing-room and be civil.

She abandoned her dreamy window corner, and the wisp of black gauze that she was fashioning into a blouse, and proceeded to the passage. The drawing-room door was ajar. Hearing an animated discussion within, she paused, hesitating. They seemed so cheerful: why should she interrupt?

". . . the doaty little room—I always say!"

"Sure it's no bigger than a birdcage—"

"And it's the rale little owld bird Miss Joscelyn is. Wait till you see her! She's that dhry—she'd lay a cherry to the bone, in three pecks—and never take a drop of juice out of it."

"Och,—Katie dear, it's doying for me lunch I am!"

"Glory be to God! And you with that great cup of Bovril and all!"

"Bovril? What way would that go? And I with the gaping cavern inside!"

Here the speaker, evidently the late prisoner, groaned with a reverberation which certainly indicated hollowness; then continued with a passion which made Anne start:

"Two teeth in the upper jaw. And one the best I had in me mouth. I am asking myself, was it worth it,

now? Och, the awful struggle and the way the fellow came at me——"

"The brute!—All Oireland is proud of you today! The name of Honoria O'Gorman Feeny will ring in every Hibernian heart."

"I'll be grateful to you not to be going on that way, Kate. What did you bring me here at all for?"

"What did I bring ye here for, is it? If you weren't so empty, you'd have heard me tell you, twenty times, that if Miss Joscelyn takes you up, your fortune is made. It's well off she is, and if you're the woman I take you for, it'll never be a penny less than twenty pounds towards your expenses you'll get out of her."

Anne began to think that she was hearing too much and had better either withdraw or present herself, when the click of the key in the lock announced the return of the hostess proper.

CHAPTER XVII

FOLLOWING her aunt into the drawing-room, Anne was amused to see the air of gentility, not to say dignified languor, which the heroine of Pentonville Prison instantly assumed upon their entrance.

"Introduce me, Kate," murmured the martyr to her companion. And, in response to Miss Jane's brisk "How do you do. I'm pleased to make your acquaintance, I'm sorry to have been out," she rolled her head and begged, in an extinguished voice, that "Miss Joscelyn would not mention it at all."

"You're before time, you know," said the downright Jane, looking at the clock. "Sit down. Let us have a little talk. It is still five minutes to one."

With a slight groan, the militant obeyed. She was a large untidy woman, with wispy, mouse-colored hair falling into her eyes, and a prominent row of teeth in which the missing two made a rather ghastly gap.

"She's very frightful still," said Miss Kate Kearney, explaining.

Anne, who had never heard that Hibernian expression for shattered nerves, gave a little gasp: this reminded Jane of her presence.

"I forgot to introduce my niece, Miss Anne Joscelyn."

Both visitors bowed distantly. Anne could not im-

agine why; but she saw that she was regarded from an inimical angle; and when she politely extended a hand to Miss Feeny, this latter presented her with cotton gloved fingers and an expression of haughty surprise.

"My niece is not, I am sorry to say," chirped Jane cheerfully, "one of us."

"Oh, indeed," said Miss Kearney. And her more notable friend merely glared upon the girl, as one who would say: "I was thinking as much."

"You are aware, I daresay," proceeded Miss Jane, she was taking off her small gloves and neatly folding them as she spoke, "that I am not a militant myself. And that I don't approve of it altogether. Nevertheless," she added, as the glare was transferred to her, "that does not prevent me from having the most profound admiration for people like yourself, who, seeing their duty in a certain light, are willing to suffer the uttermost, in its fulfillment."

This was a long phrase for Jane; and the color of her rare moments of emotion mounted like a flag to her cheeks. As Miss Feeny continued speechless and motionless, Miss Kearney plunged volubly into the breach:

"What I say is, all parties should draw together. Isn't there a beautiful text which says 'union is strength?' That is the motto for us. You mayn't want to go and break all the windows in Piccadilly yourself, Miss Joscelyn dear; but it isn't you that would refuse to recognize the splendid devotion of the women who sacrifice themselves. Aren't they the marthyrs? Will ever a cause flourish without the mar-

thyrs? Isn't it from the blood of marthyrs that springs the triumph of Truth?"

Here Miss Feeny groaned, and Kate Kearney declared:

"It's destroyed they have her!"

"Poor thing," said Miss Jane looking at her compassionately. "If anything could make me a militant, it's this monstrous torture of forcible feeding, imposed by the brutality of man upon defenseless woman."

"Poor thing!" echoed the show woman. "If there's one woman in the world that'll be the envy of her sex this moment, it's Honoria O'Gorman Feeny. Let her never have those two teeth put in, now! Let her go about with the want of them; that they may call out to the whole wide world: this is what the hand of man has wrought upon a woman. The hand of man, born of woman, laid in violence upon woman!"

One o'clock struck cheerfully. Jane instantly pressed the electric button. Well-trained, cherubic Jenny immediately appeared, picture of neatness, and announced luncheon. Miss Feeny groaned heavily and rolled her large untidy head from side to side.

"Honoria's destroyed," repeated her friend. "Didn't she keep the hunger strike for five days, without so much as a bite passing her lips? And wasn't she in strait-jackets, with the forcible feeding, for the other five? It's the craving she's got on. The craving which will never be satisfied again—as Doctor Ellen O'Lanagan says—with the coats of her stomach ruined."

"Dear, dear," said Miss Jane, increasingly impressed. "Take my arm. It's only a step. I always have

a cold dish first so as to be sure not to be kept waiting."

As they sat down at the little round table, Jane took up the fish slice, and began to help the salmon trout with her usual discriminating minuteness.

The Irishwoman turned her prominent blue eyes tragically towards the dish; she looked as if she could have taken all its contents herself without materially reducing the lamented vacuum. She maintained her gloomy silence until, having helped herself lavishly to Navarin, and already disposed of two glasses of Jane's excellent claret, she allowed herself to be drawn out by Kate and launched upon a detailed description of her trial, condemnation and sufferings in prison. It was a moving epic; and the irrepressible Miss Kearney was not backward in filling any pause with exclamations of admiration or horror. And Miss Jane echoed, "Shame! Shame!" from time to time.

Anne's mind, always rebellious to concentration upon the vital problem of her sex, was chiefly occupied in counting the number of biscuits which Miss Feeny had been able to dispose of with her cream cheese. She began to fear that the distinguished sufferer would remain munching till tea time; and firmly believed that only the mention of coffee in the drawing-room at last lured her from the table.

Miss Feeny accepted a cigarette from the box which Jane, although not a smoker herself, kept for other advanced thinkers. Looking up at Anne who was handing them, the militant addressed her for the first time:

"Not," she said, "that I'm able to draw properly, with the way they have me mouth."

"Isn't the wind whistling into her with every breath she heaves, the noble woman?" said Miss Kearney.

"Anne," said the elder Miss Joscelyn, as the girl began to laugh helplessly, "go and lie down, you look tired." Besides, the strictest veracity was part of the little lady's code of honor. "We have business to discuss, and it had better be in private."

"Oh, thank you, aunt," said Anne in an absent-minded fervor of gratitude.

She shook hands with the unfriendly militants. As the door closed behind her, she heard Miss Feeny remark in bitter tones of condemnation:

"I'd pity that girl!"

At tea Miss Jane was pensive; not to say a little snappy; inclined to make a good deal of Tinker, and not much of her niece. But at dinner she became communicative.

"I wonder," she began in her pop-gun way, "if you would mind my leaving you a fortnight earlier than we arranged? You can stay on in the flat, you know, until the day after Bank Holiday, when Welsh and Jenny must go for a rest."

"Of course I don't mind," said Anne slowly, while her eyes questioned.

Miss Jane's severe cameo face grew slowly pink.

"I find it's necessary for me to start my tour in Ireland earlier than I thought."

"Indeed?"

"Yes, my dear." Jane gave a chuckle which had a

certain note of embarrassment in it. "I find those women mean to go about Ireland, speechifying. And I don't want them to take the wind out of my sails."

"Oh!"

"There isn't anything to say oh! about, Anne. Please don't be interjectional on such an evident matter. It's very important that Irish opinion should be educated by the right people. Miss Feeny and Miss Kearney——"

"They are awful," said the listener ingenuously.

"Not at all, you don't know what you are talking about. They are very fine creatures. But not ladies."

"Oh, no!" Anne was not innocent of irony in her concurrence.

"No. I say they're not. Don't be silly. They are workers. I regard them as such: earnest workers. If Napoleon had picked his generals for gentlemanly manners, he would not have won his victories, aha. I am going to use them as my generals. In fact," said Jane, "when Miss Kearney urged that all parties should draw together, she made a very sensible remark. I have arranged that Miss Feeny and Miss Kearney shall join my tour."

"Oh, Aunt Jane!"

The cry was one of consternation. But the next moment Anne's unquenchable sense of humor lay hold of her. She broke into laughter; the more uncontrollable for Jane's indignant countenance.

"You'll have her up on the platform, with the 'wind whistling into her, to show what the hand of man, born of woman, has wrought.'"

"If nothing is sacred to you, you should at least respect other people's convictions!"

Miss Jane drummed on the table, and there was a fierce patch of red on her cheek bones. Then she suddenly began to laugh too.

"Miss Kearney will be very popular I am sure," she resumed. "It's not at all a bad thing to have comic relief when," her voice grew solemn again, "there's such real tragedy at the back of it all. Oh, my dear, what that poor woman suffered!"

There were ten strawberries in a little bottle before them. Jane divided them with scrupulous fairness. Then she asked abruptly where Anne meant to go, in August.

"Lady Grizell has promised to get me work, you know," said the girl, flushing a little.

"Oh, that's all right then," responded the elder comfortably. "Grizell is quite to be depended on. I expect she's got some gardening college in her eye."

Then she fell to lamenting that Grizell, with all her practicality, should find it necessary to take two months' rest away from her work.

"If she followed my example," said Miss Jane, "she would never want it. Fifteen minutes' strict repose, four times a day, will keep any worker in perfect condition."

CHAPTER XVIII

DEAR ANNE, [wrote Lady Grizell,]

I believe you are alone tonight; and a first evening alone is always rather desolate. I am, unfortunately, obliged to take my turn at the Working Women's Club at Bow, and shall only be back for supper, at nine. Will you come to this late meal? I may have another guest.

Your affectionate
GRIZELL KENNEDY.

ANNE was the better pleased that, with her Aunt's departure, she had begun to feel the uncertainties of the future in general, and the immediate future in particular, weigh upon her spirits. What was to become of her after August the fourth? She could not leave London without paying some of her bills; and that done, there would scarcely remain a ten pound note.

Lady Grizell's promise to find work for her had not crystallized. Here was the eighteenth of July; unless she stayed on by herself in the flat, and lived on Jane's credit, there was literally nothing before her, but to put her pride in her pocket and offer herself to some forgetful friend. This, she knew, she would never do; nor yet would she attempt to borrow money.

The invitation came, therefore, at an opportune moment. It was clear that she had one friend, who, if new, meant to prove a stanch one.

She had been told to trust. She would trust. And she had, too, the agreeable sensation of knowing that her pride was in safe keeping in Lady Grizell's hands.

She walked through the cool evening air, in the after glow of a hot day. London had its usual July feeling of being exhausted as to oxygen, with the accumulated dust of a year's traffic about the streets. Yet, it had a look of beauty, too; for the red that lingered in the west was deepened and intensified by the smoke haze and the dust; and a star in the sky as well as the lamps that were beginning to be kindled, shone with exquisite primrose flame, out of the general soft incandescence.

Lady Grizell had already returned, and met her in the drawing-room. She kissed the girl with a little more than her usual cordiality, saying:

"That's right! And did dear Jane go off, with all her little bags and parcels, just fifteen minutes too early at Euston, and a packet of Marie biscuits in her hand, to nibble at all the way from Holyhead, in case she should feel sick?"

She did not expect an answer; but, having established her guest on the sofa, instead of sitting down beside her, began to move about the room, tilting the green shade of an electric light; drawing back the curtains from the open window that gave on the garden; straightening the photograph of Allan McClurg upon its little table. As she did so, she looked at it and laughed softly.

Anne watched her with surprise. This restlessness was very foreign to anything she had ever seen in the

reposeful, self-assured woman. A sense of something impending was in the air, the girl thought; and her pulses quickened. Yet, even with this foreboding, she was totally unprepared for the sight of Minniglen walking quietly into the room, looking young and distinguished in his evening clothes.

He, however, had evidently expected to see her; for he came straight up to her with hand outstretched. There was a light in his eyes. The room went round with Anne. She made a frantic clutch upon all her faculties; and found herself with her hand in his.

He gave her a grip, the pain of which helped her to gather herself together. Then she spoke with stiff lips:

"I had no idea——"

"No," said Lady Grizell. "Quite a surprise, isn't it?"

Allan McClurg dropped the hand he was holding; and Anne knew that, in a reaction from pallor, she had grown crimson.

"He came with me to my girls' club; wasn't it good of him?" Lady Grizell flowed on while the young man stood on the hearth-rug before the flower-filled grate, and looked down upon Anne's bent head, still with that light in his eyes. "We had a very nice meeting, hadn't we, Allan? My girls were so bright and understanding."

"They made a fine row," said young McClurg.

"Yes, the dear things. They always do; but they're improved. They hardly ever bring fried fish in their pockets, now, or storm the platform to get at me to

see what my dress is made of. They think I'm terribly old-fashioned. But they have a certain respect for me, all the time; for, the moment they get my skirt between finger and thumb, they know it is good stuff. 'Eight and elevenpence a yard,' is their verdict. And I become proportionately valuable."

The clock of Mayfair chapel struck the quarter past nine; followed by the deep vibrations of distant Big Ben, brought on the southerly breeze. Anne was oddly pleased to find that her hostess seemed unconscious of the flight of time. Jane would have already pressed her electric bell at least three times, and probably have ended by a visitation to the kitchen. Lady Grizell sat happily on. It was, Anne thought with an expanding heart, as if they three found it good to be together; and for the moment wanted nothing better.

"Isn't he nice, Anne?" pursued Lady Grizell. "He has given me the use of a lodge, up at Minniglen, for my delicate ones. And I shall have them in batches, all the summer—" she broke off. Her eyes twinkled. "You and I shall look after them, Anne."

"I—" said Anne, and lifted her head.

"Didn't I tell you," said the elder woman, in a voice half playful, half authoritative, "that I was going to help you to study gardening? Allan's garden is a perfect wilderness. And I am going to make a perfect paradise of it. And I mean you to help me. We shall get the best gardener to be had in Scotland, and you will learn from the beginning, working with——"

"Look here, aunty," said Allan McClurg, "you're

making an awful botch of this—you don't mind my saying what I think?"

"Oh no, darling!" said Lady Grizell with a gurgle of laughter.

"All that stuff about learning gardening does not come in at all." He took two steps towards Anne, and stood before her, holding himself very straight, so that in his great height he seemed to tower; his head slightly thrown back, his arms hanging like those of a soldier at attention. "Miss Joscelyn, you're not wanted at Minniglen to learn gardening, or for the sake of those abominable factory girls. Will you come and pay me a visit, with my aunt? It's a lonely place, a poor place, but it's better than London, by a long chalk." There was a little pause; then he repeated, with a sudden drop in his voice that stirred Anne to the marrow: "Will you come?"

Hardly knowing what she said, Anne stammered:

"To Minniglen!" The very word was honey on her tongue.

"If you will do me that honor," said he.

He might be a wild creature, the "savage from the glens" as Jane called him; but centuries of gentle blood were manifest. Anne looked helplessly at Lady Grizell; then, with unconscious appeal, up at the rugged youthful face:

"If you really want me—if it's not only to be kind——"

Under the jut of his brows, his strange eyes flashed.

"I have come all these miles, just to ask you."

"Yes, indeed," said Lady Grizell. "And he's going away again tomorrow night, the naughty boy."

"I can't stay in this place," said McClurg, turning to his aunt with a boyish impetuosity, and added: "The heather will be coming out." Then he looked back at Anne, and said: "It's settled."

She hardly knew if she answered him. Their gaze mingled again. It was sufficient.

The paternal butler announced supper. And upon Allan McClurg's arm Anne went on to an odd, merry, happy meal of which she retained, in her unexpected and overwhelming bliss, scarcely any definite impression. She knew that they drank water—since, for the example, Lady Grizell never allowed wine at her table—that they ate tough cold chicken—unlike Miss Jane, Lady Grizell was not remarkable for her housekeeping; that the young man's one idea seemed to be to pile strawberries on the guest's plate; that he gave her all the cream, with an impish grin at his aunt,—at which that lady was infinitely delighted as at a superlative witticism.

They remained round the table, in the noble Georgian room, till coffee had been forgotten, and Allan and Lady Grizell had smoked several cigarettes. Before they parted, Lady Grizell declared that she had not forgotten her intention to take Anne to Kew; that they would go next day—while they yet had a cavalier—when they could cast out plans for the Minniglen gardens.

Anne felt that this was, once more, very tactful of her hostess, and that it gave her a kind of standing

outside that high and still secret pinnacle upon which she had been so suddenly poised as scarcely yet to have secured her balance. It enabled her to say a composed farewell now:

"I would like to help in the making of your garden."

To which, as he pressed her hand with that grasp that hurt and delighted her, he replied, almost roughly, yet with that dropping voice which meant so much in her ear:

"You shall do, at Minniglen, any mortal thing you like."

CHAPTER XIX

ANNE'S own skies were so serene that she scarcely realized what clouds were gathering over the world outside, until the thunder of the storm reverberated with sinister voice, and the sound was thick with menace over every roof in the kingdom. Then it seemed to her that she had hardly time to look up into the awful heavens before the crash came.

Lady Grizell had been away from her London house for an annual visit to an old friend in Sussex. But the day after the declaration of war, Anne received a telephone message, announcing her friend's return to London, and begging her to come to her.

"You are, please, to go up to her ladyship's bedroom," said Osborn.

He turned a solemn excited face upon her. She had found him standing at the open front door, talking in an animated fashion to the driver of an arrested taxi and the milkman; which last personage, upon the visitor's appearance, had dived down the basement steps, clinking his cans.

"Terrible news, miss!" said the old servant as he took the parasol from her hands. "I've had my doubts of those Germans a long time."

As a rule this home received Anne with an effect of personal welcome; its atmosphere closed about her like arms of kindness. Today it seemed to her as though the

life in it, if not struck dead, was held in abeyance as by some evil spell, that its spirit was crouching, shrunk away, holding its breath, as in anticipation of a mortal blow. She was cold, her heart was gripped, as she ran up the stairs.

Lady Grizell, still in her traveling garb, was sitting in an armchair, her hands, with one glove on, one off, folded in her lap. They held a letter between them. When she saw Anne, she put the sheet on the table, got up and opened her arms. It was into a maternal embrace that the girl was drawn. A very close and tender one; but somehow, to Anne's stricken fancy, like a farewell.

"What is it?" she said, breathlessly, calling on the something that she felt but knew not yet, to come forth and unveil itself.

"My poor child—" said Lady Grizell; "we have got to show our mettle."

"To show our mettle?" Anne vaguely echoed.

"Yes." The elder woman had a pale smile: "The mettle of our pastures—or of our pavements. It does not matter what of—our English mettle. We must all be English today. It is a lesser thing for those of us who have lived our lives, to see our plans shattered. But it is hard on the young. It is hard on you, and—" her voice faltered, she hardened it and went on: "and on my boy. We can't go to Minniglen."

"No?" Anne was just able to stand erect and to fill in the pause with that single word.

"No, I could not take you. And if I could, where

would be the use? We should not find the master there."

"No?"

There was a question in this second no; upon which all Anne's energies hung. She was dazed, she did not yet undertsand.

"Ask yourself," said Lady Grizell compassionately. "You do not know him so well, nor so long, as I do. But, after all, you do know him. He and every man on his estate——"

"Oh, I see."

War. It seemed extraordinarily far off, like some lantern picture, all fire and smoke, flung upon the horizon. It presented as yet no sense of reality, except just in so far that her pretty house of cards had been beaten down, within the hour of its erection.

"Now, what are we going to do?" Lady Grizell spoke rather loudly, as if she wanted to rouse her companion.

"What?" asked Anne obediently across the numbing pain.

"Yes, you and I? We've got our woman's work. Let it be together. I have been asked—" she turned and took up the letter from the little table, "to undertake the organizing of the first hospital for the Women's union. Yes, its quick work. We want to be as ready for the field as our brave men. I feel it a great honor that it should be entrusted to me. I expect you to help me as my secretary."

Anne tried to feel interested, braced and comforted; but she was conscious of the futile effort. She longed to get away into solitude and fight the sudden and un-

believable dismay, and to master it. But Lady Grizell seemed to notice neither her want of animation, nor her white stricken looks. She paused a moment, with knitted brows,—thinking. Then she issued her further decisions:

"It is just possible Jane may come back from Ireland; but that need not alter our arrangements. You had better go home to the flat for tonight, pack up and come here tomorrow, to stay with me. It will be more convenient for me to have you on the spot; and we shall have lots of work to do. Lots! We cannot begin too soon. You will like to work with me, won't you?"

Her voice had again that stimulating sharpness.

"Oh yes, yes—" Anne tried to galvanize herself to a suitable energy of response.

"That's right. Good-by, now."

Osborn stood aside to let Anne pass. She did not understand what he said to her until he ran down the steps after her, with her parasol in his hand. With heavy feet she dragged herself back across the Park.

As she reëntered the flat, she was, for the first time since her aunt's departure, struck by the forlorn, neglected appearance of the little rooms that Jane had kept with a sort of burnished neatness. The fussiness which had seemed to be so tiresome: "Jenny, you haven't dusted that corner;" or "Jenny, pick up those flower leaves;" or "Jenny, don't forget when you put the tea table by, to come back and brush up the crumbs,"—these perpetual admonitions evidently had their uses. Aunt Jane's pretty Devonshire maids, left to themselves, were just as sloppy, just as unreliable,

just such pleasure-loving shirkers as the rest of that modern class. It was only their mistress's driving energy that produced such punctuality and spick and span order.

Anne stared about her disconsolately. Tea was laid with dim silver and a crumpled cloth. Jane's favorite orange tree was dry in its pot, with bare stalk, dropping leaves. The parquet floor, which should have gleamed with polish and have flung up the aromatics of beeswax and turpentine, was gritty under her foot, and still marked from the last rainy day and some accident Jenny had had with the tea kettle.

"You'd like to work with me, would you not?" had said Lady Grizell. What had Anne been thinking of this fortnight? What use could she be to anyone, if she could allow herself to drift off into unsubstantial realms of her own, while the actual little world of which she had charge became disintegrated?

It was an odd way to spend the evening hours of this day of universal desolation, of private intimate disappointment; but it was perhaps not so bad a way. Anne determined that she could not leave Jane's dainty nest behind her in such a state. She rang the bell, two or three times, in vain. At last a modish young woman appeared, in a remarkable pink Tam o' Shanter, and bright purple sports coat. Anne stared some time before she could recognize the little cook whom she had often admired in her crackling white cotton and tidy cap.

"Did you ring, miss? Jenny's gone out. And I'm sure," tossing her head, "I haven't the least idea when

she'll be in. I was just going round, if you please, miss, to tell the carrier to call for my box, me and Jenny being due for our holiday tomorrow, as I hope you haven't forgotten, miss."

There was a glitter in the young woman's eyes which said: "Prevent us at your peril."

"Oh, of course,' said Anne.

Jane's culinary treasure tossed her head again at the surprise that still lingered in the young lady's gaze. With a slam, she closed the door between them.

Anne waited till a faint reverberation announced the shutting of the service door; then went off upon a tour of exploration. Dusters, brushes and a glass dish full of mysterious yellow compound which she recognized by the smell, were forthcoming after some difficulty.

Then she slipped on an old cotton frock of pre-mourning days, tied an Italian silk handkerchief over her head, and started upon her self-imposed task. Anne undertook the restoration of the little double drawing-room, partly as a self-inflicted penance, partly because she felt that, in her present stage of mind, drudgery would be a relief.

It was harder work than she had thought, but also more interesting. A carmine shaft of light first drew her attention to the flight of time; and, looking up from where she knelt, she saw with amazement that it was past eight. Just at that moment the door-bell rang sharply. Anne ran out, looked in kitchen and pantry, in vain; then, with a shrug, she went and opened the door herself.

It was only the porter, with a telegram. Anne took

it, shut the door, and turning on the light, for the lobby was dark, read the following message:

Better join me. Sheldon Hotel, Dublin, tomorrow.
JANE.

Anne realized now that she had had after all hidden comfort in her desolation since she was able to telegraph back:

Going to stay and work with Lady Grizell.

How unthinkably odious it would have been to have had to obey this summons. Jane, and a suffrage tour, and Allan McClurg going to the wars, and Minniglen fading in the unattainable north like the sunset into the night. Absorbed in thought she heard presently the grind and click of the lift without noticing that she did so. A moment later the bell rang, shrill, a second time.

"I must again be parlor maid," she thought, amused in a surface way. She opened the door. A man stood on the threshold, so tall that his head seemed to touch the lintel.

"Is Miss Joscelyn—" He stopped. "You!" he said. "You, Anne!"

"Come in, come in!" Anne was scarcely aware that she had held out both her hands, until she found them strongly clasped.

She drew him in and released herself to close the door on the outer wilderness of echoing passages.

"Come in," she said again.

It was an exquisite moment of happiness when they

were shut in alone together in this high nook. She put her hand on his sleeve and led him into the sitting room. It was all encarnadined with the sunset. Not till she had come into the rosy glow, and saw the furniture pushed on one side, with her little dish of polish in the middle of the floor, by the duster, did she remember what she had been doing and how she looked. Laughing and blushing, she stepped back from him and put up her hand to pull the bright kerchief from her hair.

"No, don't!" It was the husky note; the strand of emotion in his young voice that always found its way to sleeping depths in her heart and troubled them. The sleeves of her cotton frock were turned up, and her beautiful slender arms were bare to the elbow. She made a gesture to pull them down, when he took her by both wrists.

"Anne," he said, panting, "Anne!" And the next moment was crushing her to him; kissing the strands of loosened hair, her brow, her cheeks, her lips.

She felt as if in that passionate silence she could hear him call her by a hundred tender names. She remembered how that same fierce grasp had caught her at the little Highland station; and how she had thought with a kind of rapture that death was rushing upon them. Now, a voice cried in her, like a ringing bell of joy, that life was coming, life at last! The next moment she remembered Lady Grizell's face of trouble, her tone when she had said that Minniglen would be "without the master." Shuddering, she drew herself out of his arms.

"Oh," she exclaimed, the anguish uppermost. "I had forgotten the war!"

"The war—that's the most glorious part of it all. The war and you! It's too much, almost."

She pulled the gaudy scarf from her head, and the sleeves to her wrists; then, with quick fingers drew order into those loosened wings of hair.

He broke off in his speech, but his gaze worshiped her.

"After all I do like you better without that thing on your head." He laid a timorous touch upon the dusky bands. "How soft," he said, as if to himself, "how fine!" He looked like a wondering boy.

She felt, for the first time, years older than he. It was not the moment for consecutive thought, but, behind the confusion, there was the odd sense of loss. When would the Parsifal of the forest show himself once more the Parsifal of the Grail? When would the man of the mist reveal himself again?

"Allan! It is good of you to come and tell me that you love me." She captured the caressing hand and held it. "It makes all the difference. I can be strong now. Your aunt wants me to work with her."

"Work? what do you think I have come down eight hundred miles at a flight for? I traveled all night from Minniglen to get to Glasgow this morning. I came straight from Euston. I knew what I had to do. I have got to marry you, and then go and fight the Germans. I've got to marry you first," he went on, raising his voice, as if to bear down unspoken opposition. "As soon as possible. At once. I'll take you to Minni-

glen. They'll give me a week. I'll get a week somehow. We'll have a week's honeymoon. And then——"

She was swept off her feet by the tide of his happy ardor. She called his name as the swimmer gasps for breath after the wave has broken over him.

"And you'll stay at Minniglen," he went on. "Work? Work? That'll be your work: to keep my home warm. My home! my sweet wife!"

Anne was against his heart again.

When Sidney Hanks had wooed her the one touch that had found an echo in her was when he pleaded that she should make his home for him. She blessed God, now, that she had known how to say no. Yonder, in the hills, was the only home for her heart. Minniglen! Thither she could "fly and be at rest," even with the master gone.

The red light had faded into the brown hour; dusk was creeping and thickening about them. He had never asked her for her love; he had taken her for granted. He had not begged her to marry him, he had announced his intention of doing so. She was "my sweet wife" to him, already in a tone of mingled mastery and tenderness. It was too lovely in her ears for her to make any artificial feminine protest.

"You've always been my knight from the very first," she said to him presently.

"I?" he laughed. She was holding him back from her, with a hand on either shoulder. He kissed each delicate hand in turn as they held him.

"Well, I've come to take my lady from rubbing the

floors, anyhow. You smell of the pine woods. It's delicious; but I won't have it."

"I will go and make myself respectable again," said the girl. But yet she lingered. "Allan, I did not mean that—I meant—you remember our first meeting."

She had for some inexplicable reason a difficulty, a painful diffidence, in being the first to speak of those sacred hours.

"Oh, that—" he laughed again; but his accents deepened: "I loved you from the first moment I laid eyes on you."

"Allan!" She thought of the flash of the match in the white, terrible night;—of his strong face. Her heart rose within her.

"You'll be taking the laverocks out walking," he went on; and there was humor in his tone.

"Oh, but Allan!" The sense of curious reluctance increased. Why should he always shirk that most deep treasured of her memories; of, surely, their joint memories? He said he had loved her from the first moment, but she did not believe him. It had been something different, a cry from her weakness to his strength; from her doubt to his certainty; from the inner Anne to the inner Allan. It had been a communion of thought beyond even love. "Allan, don't put me off! I know it is hard to talk of it; I know I must have seemed to you, oh, so unutterably—" she hesitated for the word, and then added ineptly: "foolish. But you saved me. You—oh, you did more than that. I never thanked you. I do now."

She could hardly see his face: the little room had

grown dark. But she felt that her words were, somehow, passing him by. He was only thinking of love,—love. He wanted to kiss her again and again. She pressed him from her.

The door-bell shrilled through the flat for the third time. Had that summons come but one minute later, the stream of Anne's fate might have been turned from a strange course. Instead of a torrent, rushing headlong towards a chasm, overshadowed by darkling crags, it might have flowed through gentle pastures, under an open sky.

CHAPTER XX

LADY GRIZELL was on the threshold, looking from one to the other of the young faces which were brilliantly lit before her by the unshaded lights of the outer passage lamp against the inner darkness of the little flat. They stood side by side, these two. And even the most casual observer would have known at a glance what they were to each other.

For one swift moment the elder woman's face contracted. She had meant this. But she had meant to bring it about herself, with clever, tender hands; in her own way, and at her own hour.

It was the first time, in all the years, since he had been able to travel alone, that he had not come straight from the station to her arms. Her heart betrayed her.

"He is my all," it said, "and I have lost him." But even in this jealous pang, the bitterest pang that ever a woman knows; her cry was, "I have lost him, not! He has been taken from me!" To be generous in jealousy is to be generous indeed.

"Come in, aunt—come in," cried Allan McClurg, with a quaint air of being himself at home in Miss Jane's domicile.

She came in, then; swiftly, glad to be entering the shadow, to hide the face she felt so stiff and cold. She groped for a hand of each.

"So that is the way with you!" she cried, and if her voice trembled, what did it matter? It might pass for laughter.

It evidently did, with the happy youth, at least; for he answered jubilantly:

"That's the way of it, right enough, and you needn't pretend to be surprised, you matchmaker!"

Anne, in the dark, pressed her cheek, still burning from a lover's kiss, against the faded, stricken cheek of her who was giving up, or rather feeling torn from her, what had been the solitary joy of her life.

"Turn the light on, child," said Lady Grizell, speaking with an infinite gentleness, because of the abominable sharpness of her suffering. "No, not you, you silly boy! You don't know where to find the switch."

She could hear them stumble and laugh; the fall of a chair; the little scream. They were bubbling with joy; with the mounting intoxication that comes after the overwhelming discovery. She, too, once had drunk of that cup of paradise; tasted of that sweetness and strength. "The cup which inebriates me, how goodly it is!" She did not grudge it to him. God knows. She knew that swift is the draught, even when it holds no dregs of bitterness. But she had wanted to be the one to serve it. She had not wished it snatched.

Yet she was smiling when the light flashed up, and Jane's lamps were discreetly shadowed.

"When I got your telegram, announcing yourself for tonight, you sudden boy," she said, with a counterfeit playfulness which she herself thought was ghastly, but which apparently passed for good coin with the

two self-absorbed young creatures, "I rushed round to Anne to capture her for dinner. Dinner indeed? It will have to be supper. Do you know it's nearly nine o'clock?"

She paused, then, and looked round the little room.

"I see Jane's treasures are beginning to put things in curlpapers."

"Jane's treasures," echoed Allan. "Here's the treasure!" He caught Anne round the waist. "Look at her. I found her polishing the floor. The treasures, giddy goats! had left her all alone, and——"

"I'll go and change," said Anne in confusion, and disengaged herself. With her woman's subtlety she felt the atmosphere of trouble, enveloping the elder woman.

"One minute," said Lady Grizell. She stretched out her hand. "Dear Anne, come and kiss me. Kiss me, too, bad boy—darling! God bless you both, my dear children."

She held Anne, as Allan straightened himself, and gave her yet another kiss; perhaps because it was not very easy.

"Now go and dress. And, what's more, pack up just what you want for the night. I mean to keep you, now. I mean to keep her," she repeated valiantly turning upon her nephew.

No sweetness is comparable to that of a bitter sacrifice nobly made. It shone in Lady Grizell's smile, out of her tear-misted eyes, from her tired face. But the lovers were looking at each other. "You won't keep

her long," said the young man, with a shaken laugh. "I can promise you that."

As the Devonshire treasures had not reappeared, the keys of the flat, and Tinker, were left at the porter's lodge. Allan nursed the beast all the way down in the lift. Tinker, indeed, had his *villégiature* in the domicile of the red-waistcoated official; and, like Anne, brought his light luggage—in the shape of his special basket and a comb and brush. Perched on the ledge of the lodge window, he looked after them with inscrutable yellow eyes.

"I don't quite like leaving him," said Allan gravely as he took his seat in the brougham opposite the two ladies. "Poor old chap, he couldn't bear to see us go, you know."

"Allan always knows what animals are thinking," said Lady Grizell, speaking in her fond way, as if he were still her little boy.

That was all the conversation that passed in the short traject. There was scant conversation too, at the belated meal. Allan seemed to have folded himself up into his shell. Anne, with one of those glimpses of intuition, understood that he would be a reserved lover before any witness, even his aunt; that his boyish exuberance of a while ago had been surprised from him, and would not recur. He spoke no word at all of his intention with regard to marriage; but, by patient questions, Lady Grizell drew from him that he meant to join the Cameron Highlanders, and that it would not be his fault if every eligible man on his estate did not come with him. And he supposed it would be some

training, but he had not the beginning of a notion where they would be encamped.

"To think of war," said Lady Grizell, as they got back into that once serene drawing-room, where Anne still fancied all the pleasant spirits had fled into corners, cowering, "it's like a dead weight at the back of everything—a sense of illimitable sadness, too vast to be realized."

Allan gave his head that jerk which linked him with the wild deer:

"Sad, do you call it? I was in the dumps, those days when it looked as if we were going to back down. By Heaven I was. But now—it's glorious!"

"Glorious—young barbarian!" Lady Grizell's glance adored him.

"Glorious, I say." Again he flung back his head, with a short laugh expressive of the highest pitch of animal spirits, like the hoich! of the reel. "Anne, and the greatest fight that ever was fought! I shall have both. I'm the happiest man alive!"

He shot a look at the girl. He was not even sitting close to her, after the consecrated fashion; but stood quite away before the hearth, yet that look brought her a more enveloping sense of his ardor than any caress.

Lady Grizell put up her hand, as if to ward off the fatal omen of the boast.

"Ah, my darling——"

"Whatever happens, I am bound to have both," repeated Allan with an obstinate jut of the chin. "Anne and I," he proceeded, "will be married at once."

Lady Grizell looked from one to the other. There was question, doubt, in her face.

"So he says," said Anne, with a laugh that bordered on tears. "I haven't said anything at all."

He gave her another of his possessive glances, but did not take up her faint challenge. And then he turned his eyes on his aunt.

"It's what I've come down, all the way for," he said. "It's got to be done as soon as—well, just about as soon as can be. I believe there are things called special licences. I don't care what it costs. It's got to be. Anne has no one to hinder her. I have no one to hinder me.—Have I, Auntie?"

His smile was always beautiful; sunshine on the granite. But the smile he gave Lady Grizell now was something exquisite. She succumbed before it, utterly. If she had had any idea of opposing him, it vanished.

"I'll never hinder you—so long as it——"

"So long as it is for my good! Well there's no doubt about that, here. It is not, you see, as if I'd any time to lose."

"No." She was hesitating if vanquished. She put out her hand, and took Anne's nervously cold fingers. "When you first told me you wanted this—this lovely Anne, I said yes, did I not? Yea and Amen. And I promised to help you; and I think I succeeded."

"You did," said Allan, approvingly.

"Well, darling, I say yea still, and still amen. And I want to help. But I don't want you to be in so great a hurry as to spoil things. You were a very patient little boy. You used to let things grow in your garden.

You never tried to pull them by the root or force buds open before they were ready to flower."

"My dear Auntie!" the young man flung his cigarette end into the ferns and lilies behind him; straightened himself and let his glance pass fugitively upon Anne. Then he looked back at the counselor. "Nothing is being pulled up by the roots, nothing is being forced. It's the perfect bloom. It has come in a night, in an hour! You don't understand"— he knitted his overhanging brows; his eyes became fixed as upon some far horizon: the eyes that see, as Lady Grizell had called them. "We are the generation that's in this: we've got to live in it, through it. At least, she has, I may have to do"—he stopped; took another cigarette, struck a match, and resumed, between two puffs,—"I may have to do the other thing."

Lady Grizell's gaze widened, and filled with tears which were not shed. Ever since she had found the two together in the flat, and seen the marks of their sudden ecstasy in all their looks, their words and silences, she had been haunted by the line: "these violent delights have violent ends." Yet, who would grudge the soldier lover his delight, when there might well be so literally a fulfillment of the sad axiom?

"After all," said Lady Grizell, "it is Anne who must decide."

"That's all right then," said the young man, in a tone of such *naïveté* that Lady Grizell burst out laughing.

"My dear, dear boy, Anne has just said she's not even been asked! You do take things for granted."

For a short while his face clouded, knotted into a heavy frown. Anne saw that this man who she meant to marry, with a speed as yet unmeasured, was after all a being she did not know. He could be angry: very angry. Fiercely so. She had a sudden realization of it. Not that he was angry either with her silence, or with his aunt for speech; but angry with some doubt, with some black hesitant thought—that had sprung in his own mind.

"Do I take things for granted? No, never. Only what has been granted, that I take! My God, if I didn't—Anne—" He looked at her, with command and entreaty blended; with an eye that did not so much ask a favor as compel a truth.

"It is granted," said Anne.

If she did not know him yet; if he was a constant surprise, forever presenting aspects of character which did not seem to harmonize,—nay even actually contradicted each other,—nevertheless she understood each mood as it came, very well. She understood him now. The cloud cleared off his face.

"There is no more to be said," Lady Grizell gave a faint, pathetic smile. "We will both do as we are told. Now I am going to bed. And I think Anne had better not be long after me. She looks very tired."

Lady Grizell's tact was in full evidence. She kissed and blessed her nephew good-night, as she had done ever since that evening after her sister's death when she had gone into the nursery and looked upon the rosy babe in his sleep.

Anne could not guess that it had been Allan's habit

to conduct his aunt to her bedroom door, and to linger more or less there for a final gossip; that it was at such moments confidences went out from him to her. The elder woman looked back at the two with an air of maternal indulgence, and added that Anne might look in upon her and say good-night.

Anne was beautifully glowing from her lover's kisses when she, rather timidly, entered Lady Grizell's room. It was a hot night; she found her friend sitting by the open window, wrapped in a voluminous purple silk dressing-gown; her still abundant hair tressed in two long plaits and falling on either side of her face. There was only one heavily-shaded electric lamp in the room; and by the dim light, Anne thought Lady Grizell had something of the air of a Sibyl.

"Come and sit by me." The voice had a sound very rare in it, as if fatigue had worn it to the fiber. "No, not so far off," it went on. "Sit close to me. You will have to be very close to me, now—always."

"You are so good," said Anne; and taking the hand that was held out to her, kissed it.

"No, I am not good. Even if you were quite different from what you are, someone that I should never have wanted for Allan, I should say just the same, tonight. I think I told you before, he's the one thing in life, to me. The closer I keep to you, the closer I shall remain to him."

Anne had a far off intuition of what the woman who has ceded to another the first place in the existence of her best beloved must feel; but it was a vague impression, and fugitive. The hour of lovers is one of

ferocious egoism, even with the best. Of profound self-absorption, even with the humble. Anne had never been either unselfish or humble, and Lady Grizell began to talk upon matters which were of palpitating interest.

"Allan is twenty-eight."

"My age," said the girl. She was sitting at the elder woman's feet, looking up at the face she could but dimly see. The great stir in the great city; the heart of London, greatest heart in the world, beating as through all the centuries it had never beaten before; those throbbing sounds of stress and passion, of anger and love, of glory and sorrow, it all seemed far away. They were here in an inner world. But, as travelers drawing together in the security of some mighty ship, they were yet conscious of the very floor beneath them heaving to the turmoil of the wave.

Anne had been anxious not to conceal her age.

"Most people hold," said Lady Grizell, who knew the number of the girl's years from Jane's frequent illusions, and seemed by no means horrified, "that a man is always younger than a woman. And, in some ways, Allan is strangely young. Nevertheless, his opinions are formed. They will not change, they will not yield. What his ideals are now, what his rules of conduct,—I might almost say his judgments—they will be at sixty," her voice faltered, "if he lives."

It was a curious side of this tremendous possession of love which reigned in Anne that apprehension for the future had no place in it. She could not look beyond this overwhelming present. She could not feel the shadow of a threatening doom, in this glare of

sunshine. Allan, now; Allan and that hurried wedding; Allan and herself together, days, weeks, a month he had said—it was a stretch of paradise, an eternity. As she heard Lady Grizell falter, Anne pressed her hand; but she could not fear.

"It sometimes makes me anxious," pursued the other, "when I see how unchangeable Allan is, once he's made his mind up."

"Well, it is rather nice for me," said Anne, with a delicate laugh.

"Yes, it is nice, it is more than nice, it is splendid. But, like all splendid things, it has got its dangers. He gives you everything, once and unchangeably. But you——"

Anne caught her breath.

"I was all but engaged, when I was nineteen," she said quickly. "Oh, and I have thought myself in love quite three or four times since then." Her spasm of anxiety was relieved by the calmness with which Lady Grizell took this confession.

"Of course. If you had told me anything else, I should not have believed you. It would have been out of the bounds of all possibilities, had an attractive, sensitive creature like you, had no such experience. But if Allan is certain, or rather, since he will be certain that he is the first you loved with a true knowledge of what love means, that will suffice him; for that means an attachment to match his own. A rare thing!"

Anne felt as if there were a note of warning in this speech and the manner of it. The next words left her no doubt.

"I know you have a high soul, Anne, a soul that would not barter itself. Jane has told me certain things that she has found out. It has meant a great deal to me. I need scarcely say to such a one as you that you must not make my Allan jealous; that you must never play with the intensity of his feelings for you. Perhaps it is almost a savage intensity. Perhaps he has inherited a very wild fierce spirit which does not match his century. I see a good deal of modern life: you will have to be satisfied to be kept out of that life, for Allan would never stand about his wife the atmosphere, the tone, the conversation, the looks, the freedom, the whole pagan looseness of present society. I think if my poor lad had, by some outrageous trick of fate, given his heart away to one of these young moderns, he would have killed himself, or her, or both."

Anne listened, eagerly. She was at first enchanted, as would be any woman in love, to be told that her lover's passion was fierce, concentrated and jealous; but the talk of killing; this picture of something savage and barbaric, struck a jarring note against the strain of harmony, hidden but never forgotten. How did this presentment of her lover tally with what she knew of the mind of him who had spoken to her such words of peace? Lady Grizell called hers a high soul: if ever a soul deserved that name, it was the soul that Minniglen had once shown her.

"Oh," she cried, "do not let us even speak of such petty things! How could he be jealous? How could I ever make him jealous? There never will be place for anything so base, between us. Don't think me high

flown, but I do believe that it was our spirits that met first." She paused, a new thought had struck in, chill. "Do you mean that he would mind that stupid story of so long ago—those other fancies? If you think I ought to tell him——"

She was interrupted impatiently:

"For heaven's sake, never think of doing anything so silly! Fancies? Why should you disturb Allan with fancies? When the sun goes up the stars die. You will never want to shutter yourself against the sun; to light a dark room with a lamp. Nothing more need be said. Only remember that when one like my boy has poured his all into a single chalice it becomes a sacred vessel. But why do I talk metaphor? His love is vulnerable in the very measure of its completeness. It has always been neck or nothing with him. It does not make for safety."

"I know I am not good enough. I am an indolent, useless creature. I have not been worth much at any time. I have never felt resigned when things went wrong; and never felt that virtue was its own reward, but bleak comfort when others were warm! But I don't know why you think I could fail him. I had rather die than bring him sorrow. I would, really. I should not care if I had to scrub the floor for him. If we had only a crust between us I would be happy."

Lady Grizell bent forward and laid a touch on Anne's lips.

"You needn't say a word more. Don't protest. Would I have worked for this, if I had not known as much already? But, I suppose it's partly the dreadful

uncertainty of the future, the oppression of this war cloud: I have idiotic presentiments. There are sides of Allan's character."

"I think I know," said Anne, almost in a whisper. The unaccountable shyness was on her again. "He must have told you, I think, that when we first met, so strangely, he said things to me, things that could not have been said in ordinary circumstances. He let me have a kind of glimpse of his innermost self. I have never forgotten it. It has been—no words can say what it has meant to me. You know," she faltered, "I thought death was very near. Indeed death might have been on me, a horrible death! That breaks down conventions and outside things, does it not?"

"I did not know," said Lady Grizell pensively. "He told me very little; just the bare circumstances. But, as you say, one gets flashes, strange insights into the things that really matter, when death is close. I sometimes think—" there came a tender emotion in her accents, "I never would have known quite what Allan is, heart and soul,—I who watched him from his cradle—had it not been for a dangerous illness of mine. He was only sixteen, poor lad. They sent for him from Eaton, when they thought I would not live through the night. It seems the nurse met him on the stairs and warned him he was to give some plausible pretext to account for his presence; he was above all not to allow me to suspect there was anything alarming about my state. It's the kind of thing," said Lady Grizell, with a note of contempt, "that inferior minds do elaborate, to spare themselves unpleasant emotions. Anyhow, my boy would

have none of it. He knew me well enough to understand how I should hate to slip out of life with bandaged eyes, like a coward. He sat by my bed; held me up in his dear thin arms. 'Ah,' I said—I had pneumonia—'that is the first breath I have drawn these days!'—'Well, Auntie,' he answered, 'I'll hold you, and if God means it to be your last breath, you'll draw it on my breast.' The simple, darling child! I won't say that it was not a struggle. It was a desperate one, body and soul, for I didn't want to leave him. But he held me, and by and by I got to a place where I felt nothing mattered, for what would be must be right. And when I got to that place," said Lady Grizell, with a laugh that was not very far off tears, "it was such peace and comfort that I just got better. We held on, he and I together, through the night watches. And, once or twice, he said an unforgetable word. 'Don't turn back to think of me,' that was one of them, when I had broken off from a kind of prayer to talk of his future. 'Turn back.' A boy of sixteen, to have such a thought! My dear, I went to sleep at last, on his breast. I had turned back after all. My blessed laddie!"

Anne closed her eyes. A serenity of happiness stole over her, different from the quick-pulsing joy of the last few hours. Here she touched her dream again.

CHAPTER XXI

LADY GRIZELL had but spoken the truth when she said she would never hinder her boy in any desire unless it were one obviously to his hurt. Nevertheless, when she not only forbore to oppose his immediate marriage, but actually flung the whole of her energy and influence into the furtherance of it, there was yet another reason. She had faced an agonizing contingency and at the same time had measured its only possible mitigation. Were Allan to give his life, he must at least leave another life behind him: that "young splendor," Allan McClurg of Minniglen, must not utterly perish from the earth. The fierce human instinct was stronger than the mere personal feeling. She was not thinking of consolation for herself, or even for the widow. Perhaps instinct is a word misapplied; for this deep implanted desire of perpetuation is, after all, one of the traits that divide us from the animal, and it is truer to call it another stamp of immortality.

Most of the week that elapsed after the evening of their breathless engagement, Allan was away, at Minniglen and at headquarters. Anne remained passive. Lady Grizell interviewed lawyer and clergyman. Miss Jane was duly informed, and wrote back a characteristic letter, enclosing, which was also characteristic, a cheque for a hundred pounds.

DEAR ANNE:

You've not consulted me. So I offer no opinion. I hope you'll be very happy. I'd like to give you a good wedding present. So I am sending you one. Please understand that this is not equivalent to any expression of approval. You seem to be in a great hurry. I am very busy here, the work is most interesting, but it would not interest you. I am sure I am very much obliged to Grizell for looking after you. Isn't this war a terrible thing! When women have the vote, we shan't have any wars.

Your affectionate aunt,
J. J.

"P. S. I have written to Mr. Wilcox to see that your money is strictly settled on yourself."

"My seventy pounds a year," said Anne, as she handed the letter to Lady Grizell. She had had to realize part of her capital to pay her debts and to buy her modest trousseau.

"You'll never be rich," said Lady Grizell, "but when I am gone you won't be at all badly off."

The night before the marriage, Lady Grizell made an announcement:

"I am going to France tomorrow."

"Hello!" said Allan, turning on her.

"Yes, the moment I have seen you off at Euston, I go straight to Charing Cross. I am taking over the first contingent of our nurses to Boulogne."

Allan was not quite sure he approved.

"You see, Auntie, I count on you to stand by Anne—I mean I'd like to feel you were in the country. She

doesn't mind being alone at Minniglen, but I should like to feel she had some one to turn to."

The perfect *egoisme à deux* of the remark elicited one of Lady Grizell's indulgent smiles:

"You need not be afraid. I won't fail you."

They were to be married quite early the next day, at the Scotch church in Pont Street, with no guests but the necessary legal witnesses; Lady Grizell, of course, an elderly distinguished cousin of Anne's, on her mother's side, who was to give her away, and Allan's best man—this last, a stray Scotch youth whom he had picked up at the club. So far in his life he had no close friend.

After the ceremony they would have a long day to spend in London before taking the night mail. But none were concerned at the breaking of convention where everything was unconventional. Lady Grizell said it would be very nice to have her children with her quietly till the evening. There was nothing she so much hated as the noisy break away of bride and bridegroom, which made of the business something not more solemn than a fox-hunt.

Anne, as it has been said, was passive. She had no more sense of personal volition than if she had been in a dream, except perhaps that this happy drifting was with her full consent.

Allan, on the other hand, was carrying out a distinct set of ideas. Marriage he considered as intimate and personal a matter as death itself. He would not have had any outsiders at his wedding at the best of times; but, these days, festivities were out of place. No an-

nouncement of their engagement, by his wish, was made in the papers. The announcement of the marriage would appear after it was accomplished. And that would suffice.

He carried his singular reticence to what Lady Grizell considered an extreme point, by insisting that, even at Minniglen, the same observance of silence should obtain. There was, perhaps, something of pride in this determination. His bride could not be received with the welcome worthy of her, since any festivities would be not only out of place, but out of taste in present circumstances.

"There are a lot of men that have had to go from the land already," he explained. "I couldn't be calling on the fathers, the mothers and wives, no, not upon the kiddies, to come and be glad with me, when their hearts are as heavy as stone. I've told old Nana to keep a shut mouth. We shall be at Minniglen by lunch time; and I'll walk Anne about afterwards, and say, 'here is my wife!' The news will spread soon enough, and whatever they do to wish us joy, they'll do on their own."

When Anne awoke on her wedding morning, she realized that it was barely ten days since that hour in Lady Grizell's drawing-room when all her wrappings of hope, her secret jewels of joy, had been stripped from her, by a single phrase, when Lady Grizell had called her "my poor child," with a look that stabbed her by its compassion.

> . . . joy whose hand is ever at his lips
> Bidding farewell.

She had scarcely looked the radiant visitor in the eyes, before it seemed she must behold the fatal gesture. How swiftly, how mercifully all had been changed! Joy was hers again, to hold and embrace; given back, flung into her arms. That rounding of life, that completing of her woman's destiny vouchsafed with the suddenness, the intensity, of a miracle.

She felt a perfect ease and contentment. The steadiness of the ship that has cast anchor had come to her tossed soul. Quite unreasonably she had so strong a sense of security that it appeared as if nothing could touch them now: once that marriage vow spoken, nothing could part them,—nothing—but death. "The beating of the wings of the Angel of Death" was loud in the air, yet Anne had no fear.

She paused before the long mirror in the spacious Georgian guest-chamber, where Lady Grizell lodged her chosen ones; looked at herself critically. The severe simplicity of her new white cloth, tailor-made, suited the pallor, the duskiness, the slimness, the whole delicate high-bred personality of the creature that was Anne Joscelyn. The tired lines, the sad and disillusioned gaze of her who once contemplated herself in the turret room of Orchar Castle and said: "You poor thing, how worn you are!" belonged to a phantom of the past. She remembered that then it was her soul that could no longer drag itself, that wanted rest. Now it had found pinions.

Lady Grizell, entering upon her, gave her a swift, approving glance:

"You are charming," she said.

The girl blushed, as she slowly drove the baroque pearl pins into the crown of her curving white hat. It was a hat she might have worn on the moors on a day of sunshine; but it became her vividly, and the face beneath it was so bridal, so tender, happy, confident, that no one who looked at her could have mistaken the occasion.

They drove away, in the comfortable old-fashioned little brougham, to St. Andrew's Church, and as they passed out through Hyde Park Gate, Anne, looking back at the lodge clock, pale gold in the early sunshine, saw that it was a quarter to eight.

"When I come back, and see that clock again, I shall be married, and my husband will be beside me! It must be a dream!" She pressed her hands together. "It is a dream," she thought. "I shall wake, and——"

The corners of the antique ruby ring, set in three different kinds of gold, ran into her sharply. Her engagement ring! she was not dreaming.

They were married by a young parson, with a brisk manner and a genial, if perfunctory, smile. Allan's voice; the shaft of light that caught his cropped head and made it blaze; the touch of his hand when he put the ring on her finger; the single look he gave her when they rose after the blessing, man and wife—all these impressions blended together into one great, perfect chord in Anne's heart.

Allan was very gentle, very silent, as they drove away together. She glanced at the clock again as they passed. Anne Joscelyn was Anne McClurg. How strange! She looked down at the hand with the new

wedding ring—the hand which Allan was clasping. Those were a husband's fingers that held her with such infinite tenderness. His face was very pale, he seemed extraordinarily boyish.

As the brougham turned aside from Hill Street towards Charles Street, he lifted her hand to his lips. That was the only demonstration between them, except the whispered, "Anne, Anne!" which followed it. No outpouring of words of love and rapture; no exuberance of caress could have half so profoundly expressed the nature of his feelings for her. He had been masterful: even off-hand, conquering, stormy: today he was reticent, reverent, almost awe-struck, as one on the steps of a sanctuary.

The attitude fitted in to Anne's rather fugitive soul, her refinements and reluctances, as could no other. She told herself that she had found him again, absolutely. The first real prayer she had ever uttered went up from her soul in that hour. It was a prayer of humble thankfulness.

Lady Grizell was waiting on the door step, whither a taxi had deposited her long before the wedding couple. She drew them into the dining-room, each by a hand; and then took them both together into her kind arms. A second breakfast was laid for them, and she served them herself with a fond delight. The whole room was filled with the scent of a bunch of orange-blossoms which she had settled in an iridescent Venetian vase on the table.

It was the oddest wedding breakfast. Lady Grizell had provided porridge and cream, and honey and

peaches; all which things Allan had liked when he was "her little boy."

There was a wedding cake on the side board, which they forgot to cut, until Allan and his aunt had had two cigarettes. Then Lady Grizell declared the ceremony must nevertheless be gone through. And Allan brought Anne over to cut it solemnly.

CHAPTER XXII

LADY GRIZELL had planned the whole disposal of the day, and not unwisely, so that it should not be given over to desultory lounging. As she phrased it to herself, she did not want the couple to be at a loose end. To them she said that they would have plenty of time to be bridal, but that she would probably never have such a unique opportunity again. She proposed, therefore, that they should all lunch at the Berkeley, and Mrs. McClurg need not display her new wedding ring too aggressively, if she met any friends. Thereafter they might go to Westminster Abbey and listen to the music. It would make up for the want of it at that brief, shorn service of the morning. Meanwhile she sent Allan for a walk and claimed Anne for packing.

Miss Collins, Anne's former maid, appeared at Charles Street in the course of the morning. Anne had arranged to take her back.

It could not be said, however, that the damsel was in sympathy with her mistress' matrimonial choice. Collins had too practical an outlook on life, and had too intimate a knowledge of the splendors which, if her young lady had had a grain of sense, they, mistress and maid, might now be sharing in. She knew how to make this sentiment plain, in myriad ways; the toss of the head, the silence, the sniff, the artfully art-

less questions peculiar to the disapproving Abigail. She surveyed the white cloth wedding garments compassionately, averring that "them tailor-mades were always hard looking," and that "the velour hats were getting that common you'd see them on every shop girl. A muslin dress, now, and a panama, that would have suited Miss Anne, beg pardon, she should say, Mrs. McClurg, and she grown so thin!"

"Might I make so bold, ma'am, and ask have you put by your jewels? The pearl necklace? I have been going round the drawers and could not as much as find the case. Well, now, to think of its being sold! Sold, the beautiful pearls!"—Whatever had Miss Joscelyn and the lawyers been thinking about, to let them pearls go out of the family? Miss Anne had always looked so well in her pearls. She begged her pardon, Mrs. McClurg: it seemed so strange to the tongue like. Not a name that anybody, so to speak, would take natural to! She would make so bold as to say that, whatever new jewels Miss Anne got, she'd never have anything to beat the pearls. Would Mrs. McClurg hand over the new jewels, please? She begged pardon, she hadn't quite understood. Did Miss Anne say there weren't none? She could hardly believe that!

Anne was too happy to be otherwise than amused. But she now thought the time had come to check the transparent impertinences.

"If you pack the things you find in this room, Collins, that is all I require of you. It is not your business to inquire about the family jewels. When I want

you to take charge of them I will let you know. I will put on the gray serge."

"This hot day, miss? and for lunching out?"

"Yes. I do not mean to change again for the night journey."

Hereupon Collins re-sniffed and re-tossed her head; and picking up a gray silk hat that lay on the bed, asked, in a tone of icy disfavor, whether this was to go with the serge, as, in her opinion, the grays did not match.

Though her garment was serge and it was a hot day, Anne looked charmingly cool and distinguished in her grays. Her young husband's eyes lightened as they fell upon her.

The band at the Berkeley was wailing through that languishing waltz *Quand L'Amour Meurt*. There was the usual throng of what Collins would have called high-class people. The place had its indefinable atmosphere of well-bred extravagance and refined dissipation. Hardly had the three taken their seat at the reserved table, specially decorated with red roses, when Anne heard her name called in well remembered tones of tragic affection:

"Anne! dearest!—what a surprise! I have not seen you for so many, many weary months!"

Turning round on her chair from the next table, where she was sitting with Lady Weyford, who was attired in vermilion tussore and looked like an unusually large pillar box, Cordelia Brooksbury held out a bare glittering hand. Anne had to reach forward and touch it. Lady Brooksbury, her dark-circled eyes rolling

with a haunted curiosity from Lady Grizell to Allan, proceeded with the thrill of an organ note.

"Oh, how I have thought of you! Silence, I said to myself, silence is the only tribute true friendship can give affliction. I gave my silence, Anne, with such a full heart."

"You did, indeed, dear Cordelia," said Anne in her soft voice, drawing her fingers from the clinging pressure.

"Yes, darling. I knew you would understand. Your mourning was so sacred to me."

Here the roving glance fell on the delicate gray of her cousin's garb. And, not without her sirupy maliciousness, the soulful lady proceeded: "'Tis in our hearts we wear our mourning, is it not? Yes, always in our hearts. What did you say, dear Lady Weyford?"

The pillar box had risen. Anne looked at it apprehensively. But Lady Weyford's countenance, heavily whitened, surmounted by an amazing toque of vermilion ospreys, was wreathed in smiles. These smiles were directed to Lady Grizell and her nephew, ignoring Anne.

"How do you do, Mr. McClurg?" she said condescendingly. "Fancy this Highland meeting at the Berkeley! Will you introduce me to your aunt, Lady Grizell?" she whispered gutturally. "I have long wanted to know her."

Allan performed the ceremony, with a countenance of marked disapproval. Lady Grizell, on her side, re-

ceived the new acquaintance with easy, non-committal pleasantness.

"How do you do? I have long wanted to make your acquaintance," repeated Sidney's mother. "I am a great admirer of your personality, without, let it be clearly understood, Lady Grizell, sharing your views. I am a worker for women myself. I have a secretary, more than one secretary, whose only duties are to keep me in touch with the workers of my own sex. They collect facts; they sift evidence; they distribute pecuniary assistance to deserving cases. I should so much like to have a quiet conversation, Lady Grizell, on the vast subject which occupies us both. I would like you to hear my point of view."

"I am going to France tonight." The words were interpolated with a quiet finality, in the first pause.

"Ah, this wicked, wicked war!" moaned Lady Brooksbury. She was now devouring Allan with her appraising eyes. "This terrible war, so wrong, so cruel!—Dearest Lady Weyford"—the tone was unaltered—"your omelette is getting cold."

Anne mentally compared her new relation with the mother-in-law that might have been: Lady Grizell with her black and white flowing grenadine, her quaint Victorian mushroom hat, her patrician, witty face: her reposeful, contained manner: exquisitely urbane; aloof—and Lady Weyford, holding forth and gesticulating; Lady Weyford with solitaire diamonds the size of bottle stoppers in the lobe of each ear; with vermilion ospreys quivering; with the marvelous garment defining the overwhelming proportions of her straight-fronted

figure in all the exiguity demanded by the very latest fashion,—Lady Weyford! The bride compared, and gave thanks.

The arrival of Cherry Bradles, bustling and jingling down the length of the room, nodding afar off with waves of a flapping white-kidded hand, made a diversion in a situation which threatened to become a little strained. Cherry was peppering the air with the familiar irrelevant mirth.

"Here I am, you dear things! Dreadfully late. But they kept me such hours at Reville and Rossiter. I really told them they'd have to give me lunch, in the corset department. Carrie dear, your new dress is a dream!"

She blew a kiss from the white-gloved hand. "How do, dear Lady Brooksbury? It's awfully nice to——"

Here Cherry's patter broke off. Her eye had fallen on Anne, and then on Allan. It was an alert eye. "Mr. McClurg, I declare, and Miss Joscelyn—no! How interesting!" Her voice took an edge. "A wedding ring! It is a wedding ring, isn't it, Miss Joscelyn? Fancy! This is a bit of news. When did it happen? People do drop apart, I know. Still, you must have been sly."

She was bursting with not unnatural annoyance, for Miss Bradles was fond of her nephew; and she was a born champion.

"Anne, married——!"

Surprise had stricken for once quite an unaffected tone from Cordelia: there was almost a squeak in her voice. She caught herself swiftly up, however, and

overlaid her error with a chanting amendment. "Anne, is it possible, a wedding ring? No, some tender relic, some sacred souvenir. A mother's wedding ring perhaps drawn from a father's dead finger. Darling!"

Her predatory gaze went back to its contemplation of Allan, who, since Lady Weyford was still planted on her high-heeled serpent skin shoes, and still pouring out platitudes, stood with his hand on the back of his chair, glowering with intense disfavor at the company in general.

Cordelia's orbs traveled up the erect, lithe figure, as if measuring the unusual height; then they rested on his face. She added, still ostensibly addressing Anne: "We know, darling, the very thought of marriage has been absent from your heart for years. For years."

"When did it happen?" Miss Bradles outscreamed the band which had launched forth again, this time, upon a "two step."

Anne was suddenly transported back in mind to Orchar Castle, to the great hall: with the superior auto-fluto-viola-playelle braying to the echoes; with the gyrating, tango couples; and Cherry Bradles' patter; and the fumes of barren wealth all about her.

She remembered how she had looked out of the window, with the cry of the starling in her heart. Now she was free. A new ray of gratitude was added to the golden halo of her paradise as Lady Grizell drew her chair into the table with an unmistakable movement of finality, and said:

"Anne is now my niece, as she has married my nephew

here, Mr. McClurg, of Minniglen. Sit down, Allan, we must not interrupt Lady Weyford's lunch any longer."

Anne gave her husband a glance of happy eyes as he sat down. And he gave it back to her, with a sort of angry ardor.

"Carrie, you're simply splendid!" whispered Cherry, as she drew Lady Weyford back to her chair, with a trembling clutch. "Your dignity, Carrie! The way you ignored that abominable girl, and her stupid marriage! I'm delighted she's married. Aren't you?"

"I do not care in the very least what she does," replied Lady Weyford, spreading her napkin across the inclined plane of her lapless vermilion figure. "Once I cut her out of my list, she ceased to exist for me."

Yet there were bitter tears in Lady Weyford's little black eyes.

She winked them away, however, as she spoke these imperial words, and fell upon her omelette, which was indeed cold.

"No cutlet," commanded Lady Brooksbury to an astonished waiter. "Bring me something pure; something green, out of the earth."

"Salad," interpolated Cherry.

"Ah, how understanding you are, dear Miss Bradles! Yes, I will have a little salad. Though, really, I had rather eat nothing but some purple fruit. Something to match that rich joy behind us. Darling Anne is my cousin, you know. Isn't it romantic? Isn't it perfect! —Minniglen."

At this Miss Bradles cried out; and her artless tones

of excited discovery drew every eye in the room upon her.

"Good gracious. Of course—I had forgotten, didn't he save her life, up at Glenorchar?"

"Ah, I knew it was deeply romantic," came Cordelia Brooksbury's viol tones.

CHAPTER XXIII

IN the life of everyone there are certain experiences which remain consecrate; set apart in memory, not by reason of the intrinsic value in happiness, achievement or glory, but because of some recondite sweetness that defies analysis and yet ineradicably lingers—as humble herbs keep their fragrance when the rose and lily are but dust and decay. It may be that a child has sat upon your knee and confidently pressed its cheek against yours; its innocent and lovely touch you may remember when you have forgotten the kiss of your mistress. It may be that, one day, Nature has taken you into especial communion—an hour of solitude in some spring glade: or with the blue-bells or on some barren hill top, with the world below you, the summer sky above, and the scent of the thyme in your nostrils. You are one with the earth. The fret and fume of the century have fallen away. It is a better hour to think back upon than any of those attuned to applause or heralded by fame.

To Anne, the first half of the journey to the North was one of these recollections. Afterwards, there were to be times when its very sweetness made the memory unbearable. Yet, in truth, it had been a traject unmarked by any event.

They had sat opposite to each other in the swinging armchairs of the saloon carriage; watching in mute

harmony the sunset, the warm afterglow; then the gathering dark peace of the rising night, its paling, its spangling into stars, and, lastly, its exquisite silvering as the August moon floated up from behind the crests of black racing trees. She thought the peace of their silence, the comfort of their unspoken sympathy in this mysterious rushing towards the unknown adventure of life and love, was beyond everything she had ever known. It was the perfect sensation; better than the music of Parsifal; better even than the first kiss of Allan's lips; better than any accomplishment could be, because it was still promise.

Presently she became aware that her young husband was no longer looking on the great wheeling night, but at her. His gaze drew hers. She saw how the moonlight silvered the strong hewn boldness of his face. His prominent brows made deep shades in which his eyes glinted as the ghostly light touched them. He was considering her with a profoundness that almost frightened her. And it came upon her that her fate lay within the hands of a man whom she hardly knew. She tried to count the hours of their intercourse hitherto. He had carried her off with as swift a determination, and as sudden, as a raid. Much, indeed, as his savage ancestors, plunging down out of their hills, might have reiven a bride from the plains.

She got up. With that gaze upon her, she could not collect her thoughts.

Allan had said, in London, that he would not sleep through the journey; and she had declared that she, too, would sit up and watch the flying of the night

with him. Lady Grizell had smiled. But as she had taken leave of them at the station, she had informed Anne that Collins had the ticket for a sleeping coupé for her mistress and herself.

Anne was glad of it now, Allan brought her to the door. Before he left her, he took both her hands in his for a moment; and then, stooping that high-held head, kissed the wedding ring, as he had done that morning after the ceremony. When she closed the door upon herself, she realized that he had scarce spoken a word since they had entered the train together. But it had been a silence that held immense meanings: she knew that she was its center. Yes, she liked this silence: it brought the man of the mist, the man of the inmost dream, so close to her again.

An injured Collins assisted her to the upper berth of the compartment. And Anne, as she lay down, said to herself with a sigh: "Now I can think again."

She wanted to re-live, one by one, the events which had brought her where she was; each of those meetings, so singular from the beginning, which had fulfilled the dream. But the images passed and repassed through her brain like the melting pictures of a lantern show. She saw the crouching figure in the shepherd's hut, lit by the flame of the match; she saw the white dogs leap upon the young man on the station platform. She saw him tower in Aunt Jane's tiny rooms; look in upon her as she sat in her taxi; claim her with his eyes from the flower-filled hearth of Lady Grizell's drawing-room; stand in the passage of the flat. Then the images veered, and she was back in the mist:

it crept about her, enveloping. She was lost, more lost than she had been in reality; for in the dream of the uneasy sleep into which she had drifted, she knew that she had once been found, that something ineffably precious had been hers, something that she must work back to and regain—regain or perish. Then she felt his arm about her; and, with the dim vision of the sleeper she saw, in the twilight which is all that a dream ever gives, his face. But he was looking at her with an air aloof. She cried to herself: "It was all a dream—he never loved me!" and woke. And she found tears upon her cheek; and in the outside world, the wonderful pale gold of dawn making of the Scottish land an enchanted strand.

It was noon when they reached the little Highland station near the head of the winding loch; the station where Allan had played the Perseus part and rescued her from the deadly rush of the steam and steel dragon. She would have liked to remind him; but he was so energetically occupied in picking out her light baggage, a process which the now completely sullen Collins genteelly impeded, that it was not the moment for reminiscence.

A hired open car was waiting for them; also a luggage cart, harnessed to a useful strong bay, with a dark young Highlander whose escort would relieve them of the maid's inopportune presence. The air of the Highlands was in her nostrils, the tongue of the Highlands in her ears. From afar, moor and hill invited her: she had returned to the land of her yearning

—and it was to be home. Here was at hand another hour stolen from paradise.

The car swiftly left the small gray town, making westwards for the heart of the old Cameron country, and they fled towards the glens. Anne thought that the hills seemed to part before them, to take them into an exquisite lonely embrace; lonely, yet benign; austere yet welcoming. "Surely," she thought and looked at the set, strong young profile beside her—the face of a man who, as Lady Grizell had said, had in him the soul of his moors—"surely it will not be hard to be happy, here. Happy and good!"

Perhaps the joy of her new possession was intensified by the knowledge that parting hung over this coming together—even as the frown of Ben Nevis, the great mountain which, ever and anon, a twist in the road brought back into view, towering into the serene sky. They could not escape from it for more than a very little while; and even when not in sight, the sense of its presence was there. But then how grand a feature it was of the landscape; how fair, in contrast the gentler folds, the long, fugitive undulations, the rosy heather stretches, the still blues of tarn and loch, all the sun-steeped, perfumed land of romance that lay before the lovers on that perfect August day!

Only twice Allan spoke to her; the first time was towards the end of the hour's journey, when, the car having throbbed up a steep ascent between beetling crags, they could gaze down upon a vast panorama of wild country.

He gripped her hand: "You're in Minniglen!"

Her heart leaped to the leap of his heart. Below, far away, at the head of the glen, stood the gray castle; centuries old. Small, square, hoary; all in height, with its battlement turrets, bearing the look, even from this distance, of a sturdy stronghold. She knew already that the sacrilegious hand of the innovator had never been laid upon it; that its outer structure was just as the Galloway McClurg who had married the Cameron heiress had found it when he and his stock took root there, in the days of Bruce. Yet, even if Lady Grizell had never told her so much about the gray northern old keep, Anne could not have mistaken the far-away haunting romance of the place. Everything was unchanged: the endless hills and moors about her, the streamers in their courses, the rocks, the soaring pines—every aspect was as the hawk-eye of the McClurg might have first seen it. That herd, in his sheepskin coat driving the wild cattle—a restive shaggy throng—along the road, who fixed curious eyes upon the intruding car, might have been just such a ranting fellow, as the chieftain might have counted on. And just such a smile of recognition, worshiping, yet familiar, would have lit up the face of that retainer of old, as now suddenly flashed on the hard countenance of Minniglen's hind. The car, beating down the cliff road, with rock flung reverberation, was the only modern note.

She glanced again at her husband, and laughed. Up to this she had been very much of her century; now she would go with him, even back to his—for she was quite sure that Allan McClurg was no man of this age.

They rolled down into the valley; then up again between gates of seventeenth century wrought iron, and two stone stags that heralded the entrance to the grounds. The approach ran up hill; and the castle stood at the top of the rise, against a background of birch and pine; square, strong; not menacing but confident.

Anne laughed again as the vision met her eye. A laugh of delight and tender amusement.

"The dear, quaint, adorable place!" she cried. "It does not know that the days of defense, the days of romance, are gone by. It goes on watching the valley for the enemy."

Allan gave her an odd glance; smiling, yet wistful.

"I'm thinking," he said, slipping back into the Scots, as if the native air drawn in had to go forth again in the native tongue, "when we go fechting again, it wilna be with neighbors, it'll be shouther to shouther against the foreigner."

Anne was under the shadow of the mountain again. But the feeling passed from her as the car stopped, and she alighted at the open door.

She had been in many a Scottish castle before: but never in one so untouched through the successive ages.

She and Allan could scarce pass abreast through the narrow entrance cut into the strength of ten feet of rock, which was still, as in the days of forays and leaguers, the only access to the keep. You came in to a constricted cell of stone; and immediately to the left sprang the winding narrow scale stairs, the granite steps worn by the feet of untold Cameron and Mc-

Clurg generations; the knotted hempen rope along the wall still playing the part of handrail.

The door was open, but there was no one to welcome the homecomers. Allan caught his bride in his arms and carried her up the winding steps. Again she thought of the raider's captive, but the smile on her lips trembled upon something deeper when he released her and said, in a voice hoarse with emotion:

"You—you and Minniglen!"

He kissed her then, passionately, for the first time since they had left London.

A nail-studded door, sunk in the stonework, opened before them. An old woman stood in the aperture curtseying.

"I have brought home the wife, Nana," said Allen.

"God bless the day," she answered, and drew back to let them pass in.

CHAPTER XXIV

"SURELY," said Anne to herself, a few hours later, "never was so strange, or so sweet, a home-coming."

She was alone. Allan had left her, after their first meal together in that "solitude of two" which is the perfection of company. He wanted to take a turn round the estate and see certain of his own people. It was all according to plans long fixed.

"You rest now," he had said to Anne. "You look pale. Tomorrow you will have them all about you. Today you are mine only."

He had turned back from the threshold with a parting glance which was full of a sort of amazed joy. Her heart understood the look. So was it also with her; well nigh too good, too wonderful to be true.

The room, in which she sat, waiting for his return, was one that harmonized with the romantic mood.

Stone-walled, part hung with tapestries; cross lighted, for it ran well nigh the whole breadth and length of the keep; with a vast stone chimney roughly carven and still bearing traces of ancient coloring, it was a place almost beyond poetic imagination. The ceiling was crossed with beams, blackened by the smoke of centuries. There was, close in front of the flaming hearth, an oaken settle piled with cushions. She lay among them, stretching her fingers to the warmth. She was

glad of that fire; the chill of fatigue was upon her, the northern airs were tart. She was glad of it, too, for another reason: it was fitting that there should be fire on his hearth to welcome her.

How perfect it had all been, in its strangeness! Not a flaw, not a jarring note! The old housekeeper who had received them, an Englishwoman, with a still marked Lancashire accent, with a rosy comfortable face, had been Allan's nurse. She called him to this day Master Allan. She had looked at Anne with an air of indulgence, as if she were her nurseling's new toy; rather a wonderful and expensive toy, of which he must take great care. The bride could not be shy of her; nor of the Highland lad who had plunged round the dining table with swinging kilt, and breathed his "wull ye be pleased" into her ear as he handed each dish. He called the master "Minniglen," and told him a full history of the grouse he set before him to carve. It was all so friendly; so simple and yet so unmistakably traditional. She remembered the Weyford flunkies, parading in silk stockings, powder and plush, somewhere not so far away behind the encircling hills. Looking at the obliterated blues and reds of the carvings, hewn, God knew how many ages ago, on the chimney in front of her, she remembered the ubiquitous Hanks arms glaring out of the sugar-white stone at Orchar Castle.

Now, turning on her cushions, she gazed round the spaces about her. The dim tapestry, the austere stretches of bare wall between, with here and there a portrait. To one of them Allan had drawn her special attention, during their first scamper through the

keep. It was the Allan McClurg who had gone out with Lochiel for Prince Charlie; a wild young face under the neat white wig of his period. Anne went back in spirit to the Joscelyn cavalier who, out of the impossible gold frame, branded with the Weyford price, had looked at her with such a sad regard from amid the tormented decorations of Orchar Castle, and asked her: "Child of our house, what brings you here?" She thought of the might have been: thought how easily she, too, might have been bought. How mercifully, how gently, she had been guided!

Through the high windows, the quality of the sunshine was changing; growing richer in tones. The housekeeper came in, noiselessly; put more logs on the fire, announced that she would serve her ladyship's tea the moment it was rung for; and apologized for calling her "her ladyship." Her mind, she explained, had gone back to the days of Master Allan's mother; moreover she got into the way of it with Lady Grizell.

"Eh, mam, it does my heart good to see a young lady in the place again!"

She remained chatting a while and, finally, with a start remembering certain cakes in the oven, hurried away.

Anne sank into deeper circles of content. How happy she was going to be; how smooth lay the way before her! How she loved the silence, the remoteness, the peace! How comfortable was this dwelling, lost in the wilds,—how satisfying! Nothing was mean, nothing flashy. Tranquil; tranquil, dignified; spacious yet homelike; the few pieces of furniture each with their

meaning, their stamped antiquity, their assured air of cleaving naturally to the ancient dwelling place.

So far her thoughts had been centered upon her novel impressions. Presently, however, the focus shifted: Allan began to resume that paramount and absorbing place in her mind which he had held for nearly a year already. Allan had walked about these rooms: they had fitted his personality as the forest fits the stag. He had sprung up the winding stairs, and his tread had been light and free. The very echoes, she thought, seemed to love it. He was now out with his people, and she knew that, even as he was one with Minniglen, so were the descendants of his forefathers' leal men part of himself.

A level shaft of the sinking sun pierced in through the west window and tinctured the gray walls in amber. "He will soon be back," she said; got up, went to the door, and listened—in the way that, from the dawn of human times, the woman of the dwelling has gone to listen for the footfall of the beloved. "There's music in his footsteps—" the line sprang tenderly to her recollection. When she went back to her settle, she left the heavy door ajar.

Yet the first signal of his approach was not the expected sound of footfalls. A whistle, bird-clear and sweet, floated up to the listening, answering walls.

You'll take the high road, and I'll take the low road——

The sound pierced her with joy. He was coming to her, where she sat blessed beyond belief between his hearth and the sunshine, and his feet were set to the

same tune as that to which he had marched when he had found her, forlorn, blinded in the mists, altogether lost!

The lilt mounted, and his tread struck out the rhythm on the stone. As he drew near, his face changed.

"What—tears, Anne?"

She had not known that they had overflowed her eyes.

"Only because I am so utterly happy!" She caught him and drew him down. His arms closed about her; and her head sank, oh, so naturally, with such thankfulness, against his broad shoulder. "To hear you whistle that strophe of song! Ah, it wanted just that to complete all!"

"Do you like it so much?" Under his voice, he sang the words in her ear

"the bonny, bonny banks——"

"Oh, how much it means to me!"

"Does it?—I'd have whistled it all day, if I'd known you wanted it.—What does it mean to you, though?"

"You," she said.

He laughed, as if she had most subtly, exquisitely, pleased him.

"There is a lot in it. You found that out. Anne, you're a wonder! It is the very spirit of the Highlands. Sad though:

'I and my true love will never meet again——'

"Not the sort of thing for a day like this. It is 'I and my true love shall ever cling together.' Oh, Anne, we'll make a new song of it!"

"Ah, no! Nothing must touch that memory. We

must not change it, love. Allan, I have so often wanted to speak of what was hidden away in my heart, but something always held me back. I am glad, now, that this perfect hour should come on the first day of our married life. Allan—you have been the most precious, the most gallant, the most splendid lover ever a girl could dream of; but, in all our meetings, only once have you let me into the secret place of your soul; let me guess at the real Allan."

"When was that?"

He spoke a little hoarsely, as he did when moved. And his grasp about her tightened.

"Ah," she said with a faint falling note of disappointment, "why do you ask? You know. You saved me——"

He interrupted.

"Oh, that!"

"Do not laugh; let me speak. The first time, above all, of the many times you have saved me—yes, you did, Allan, you did. It was not nonsense—not only then, but under the train, and later again. Where should I be, without you—what should I be? The most lonely or else, in my own eyes, the most dishonored. I might have married Sidney Hanks. I might—hold me close, darling!—had I not met you; had it not been for that night."

"That night?"

He gripped her, till she almost cried out. Yet she loved the fierce clasp.

"That night," she went on, breathing quickly, "when I saw into your higher self, your real self; the self that

you hide away from the world; that you have hidden even from me, except for just now and then a glimpse. That night when I told you all the misery of my own wretched vacillating, tormented soul, when I——"

The arms about her relaxed; fell away. She still had her head upon his breast: the pulses of his heart, which had quickened under her ear, quickened again, to fierce hammer strokes.

"What is it?" she cried, frightened, straightening herself to look at him. His face was ashen, his lips set.

"What night are you speaking of?"

Terror came upon her. Terror of something as yet unknown.

"Allan!—Allan, what is it? Why do you ask? That night of nights. That night when you were out in the mists, and came upon the creature lost on those hills —your own hills. The first time we met. Have you not told me that you loved me from that very moment? We saw each other only by the flicker of a match, but we had already seen each other's souls——"

He got up and stood, towering threateningly above her; and his face had a fierce, stricken look.

"Oh, is it possible—" A sudden explanation flashed upon her with an unbearably keen pain. "Is it possible that you never recognized me, after all! That you never knew me for the unhappy guest of Orchar Castle, astray so much more in spirit than even in body, the woman to whom you were so heavenly good; to whom you showered such indescribable kindness, gave strength, comfort, help?—You swung me up to your own height. Oh, I have treasured every word. That

meeting has been the keystone of my house of love. Every thought I have had of you was sprung round it. I have dreamed back on the refuge, the rough shepherd's hut, as the most sacred place for me on earth. How I have planned our going there again together, you and I!—Oh, Allan, and all the time you never recognized me! It meant nothing to you!"

Her voice faltered. Blank misery closed about her. Why were his eyes so strange? Why was he now darkly flushed, after his unaccountable blanching? There was a few moments' silence. Then he said, with a laugh that rang like madness:

"It was not I you met—that night!"

"Allan——"

"I never picked anyone out of the mist. Never talked to any woman in a shepherd's hut; or helped, or comforted——"

His voice rose till it seemed to beat about her ears like thunder. She cried as if he had struck her; lifted her hands as if to ward off the next blow. It came then, stunning:

"It was some other man."

"But I saw you—I saw your face!"

The protest was feeble; hardly breathed. Even as she made it, she knew that she had not seen him; that she was confronted, at last, with the truth. More, she knew that she had been nourishing a delusion; the wildest, the most unsupported. Allan McClurg and the man in the mists had never had any trait in common save that of an outward resemblance.

He laughed again: turned and savagely struck at

the carved stone of the mantelpiece with his clenched hand; then stood leaning his forehead against it, his back turned upon her.

She heard the ticking of a clock, somewhere at the end of the room. Was it possible that it had been going on all the time—that deliberate, relentless measure, counting out her hour of happy solitude? She saw a drop of blood fall upon the hearth from his bruised hand. Her own words seemed to be shouted back at her—"your higher self—your real self"—"every thought I have had of you"—"how I have treasured each word!"—"your heavenly goodness to me, your strength, your help!"—"you swung me up to your height"—"the keystone of my House of Love!" Her House of Love! It was shattered. She sat among the ruins. There wasn't a stone left upon a stone! What she had seen in his eyes she knew now: it was horror. Horror. With her own foolish hands she had pulled down the tower of shelter and happiness. With her own babbling, she had kindled the fire of destruction; and it was leaping, consuming, laying waste! In a little while nothing would be left but ashes.

At last she spoke his name; and, as he paid no heed, cried again on him, despairingly:

"Allan, turn round! Allan, speak to me!"

He wheeled about, straightened himself, and fixed upon her a gaze full of bitterest anger; and yet a gaze that mourned, reproached; and at the same time repudiated. He was incredibly altered. His countenance was seared, lined; his set teeth and his frown made his chin and his brow jut. She thought it was truly a face

of granite; and the last of her creeping hopes died within her.

"It is you who must speak," he said.

The youthful ring had gone out of his voice; it stung her with its accent of contemptuous command.

"What can I say?—I made a mistake. Must it—must it——" The appeal withered on her tongue under his laugh:

"Tell me about that night—that night of nights! Tell me everything."

"I think I have already told you," she answered, drearily, "too much!" But his eyes flashed such suspicion and menace that she hastened to add: "There is nothing I could not tell the whole world. There is nothing that you need mind. Only my folly, my mistake! I had been very lonely and very sad; and sick, sick to death, of the emptiness, the miserable round of amusement. You know I am twenty-eight. I have had ten years of it! Not a real friend; not an interest. Wretched drifting, and, oh, hating it!—And my father wanted me to marry that man, Sidney Hanks, for his money. For the sake of Joscelyn Court. He thought we could break the entail and buy the heir out. It had become his craze, his obsession——" She broke off. A vision of her dead father, lying in an infinite serenity, painted itself before her. "Oh," she wailed, wringing her hands, "would that I were dead too!"

His eyes were ruthless:

"Go on. That was what you were staying up there for—with that set!—I suppose."

"At least, do me that justice," she retorted, with a

sullen fire. "I did not lend myself to the plan. I refused Mr. Hanks. Indeed, it was to escape from him that I walked away into the moors, where the mists caught me. I ran from him, and all the odiousness; and I lost my way——"

She felt gathering upon her an odd spell, as if the words she spoke had lost their meaning; had become dead, useless sounds. But she struggled on.

"I was quite lost, for hours. I thought I should die there, that night. I kept striving. I thought if I once sat down to rest, it would be the end. And then—and then——"

"You were rescued, by a wonderful being."

This was a sneer. She wanted to resent it; but could not and went on, dully:

"I heard someone whistling——"

"Ha!" The exclamation was fierce. "What was he whistling?—What tune?"

"'The Bonny Banks,'" she murmured, feeling that these dead words had suddenly turned upon her with an evil life, and betrayed her.

"I thought as much!"

Oh, how she wished he would not laugh! Better his anger, his airs of threat, his terrible frown. A ball of agony rose in her throat. It would be impossible to utter anything more.

"Go on."

"Allan!"

"Go on, I say."

Hoarsely, in broken phrases, she tried to obey. He had the right to know.

"I called out—he heard me. We found each other. I could not see him, nor he me. But we groped, and went by the sound of our voices. He brought me into shelter, a shepherd's hut—till the mists should shift a little. We got talking. He was kind; he—he spoke of God, and duty. He tried to light a fire. There was only one match. I saw his face, barely a second, one second. Oh, Allan! Oh, Allan!"—she burst now into rending sobs, "I thought it was you."

Her agony did not move him. She strove for self-control. His mind towards her was as a door of brass.

When the paroxysm had somewhat subsided, he walked away and paced the great room to the end; and then he came back to her:

"There's a fellow on the place," he said, "a shepherd. He's my double, a cracked body, that has been to the university and gone mad on religion. He's like me, in the face." The young man paused, and it was the laugh again. "Yes, he's like me, right enough, and with reason. My grandfather was an old devil!—His name is Duncan. Duncan Cameron. I saw him just now, and he was whistling 'The Bonny Banks.'"

Allan flung the words at her. She told herself, in almost a delirium of anguish, that it was as if he were shoveling earth upon the coffin of their love. He went to the door, paused on the threshold:

"I caught the tune, that way. It is a song for us, after all, Anne.

"I and my true love shall never meet again,
On the bonny, bonny banks——"

She thought that nothing in the world could ever hurt her so much again as the irony of the chanting voice. But, when the door slammed behind him, with a hollow echo, she knew it was the worst of all.

CHAPTER XXV

THE echoes of the fiercely shut door reverberated in the room, and something cried in the unhappy woman's soul: "It is the end!"

But, the next moment, common sense reasserted itself; natural hope clamored: "No, it cannot be the end. We are husband and wife. We have vowed to cleave till death. I have done no witting wrong. In a little while we must see each other again. Then we will talk in calmness. Oh—are there not the meeting places of our acknowledged love still left us? All cannot have been swept away by my mistake, one mad absurd mistake!"

She crouched on the settle, striving to plan the words with which she would set her case before him. There was frantic confusion in her heart and brain. Could she truthfully say to him: "That man whom I met but once, for whom I mistook you; I never loved him. The first moment when love sprang was when you caught me to your breast, on the railway lines."

Was it true? Now, turning an awakened eye upon the past, she told herself that it was. But, scarcely five minutes before, had she not sworn exactly the reverse? How could he believe her? How could she, in this flagrant contradiction, make the integrity of her soul ring clear?

She must find some other way to prove herself. She

must open her whole life to him and that with scrupulous frankness. Above all every thought which had crossed her mind that night, every word spoken in the darkness between herself and her unseen deliverer, she would repeat to him who was her bridegroom. He would see then, as she herself saw ever more clearly, that no sane man could nourish the faintest jealousy of an encounter so purely spiritual. As reasonably might the Catholic be jealous of the unknown priest to whom his wife might have, in confession, unburdened her soul, in a darkened church. As they had met, so they had parted: nameless, without farewell.

Yet, even as she formulated her plausible theory, it would not hold together. If nothing but the crystal truth could save her, here was not the truth. Allan's double, the "mad body, gone on religion," had indeed shown himself as impersonal to her as the patient confessor to his penitent. But she? No, she had not been impersonal to him. She had wanted to meet him again: not perhaps from any folly of love, nevertheless ardently, with a sense that her whole existence must now turn upon the meeting. What she had sought in Allan, through his tempestuous wooing, in the very kisses of his young lips, had been all along what she had found in another man. And a minute ago, in Allan's arms, she had called on that other with every ardor and extravagance of expression her longing could lend. The mad shepherd: if McClurg blood ran in his veins, it but added another hatefulness to the situation.

And Allan had brought her a virgin heart!—It was a blind passage. What way was there out, but the un-

bearable one of retracing steps, going back to the dead street with the closed doors? Like withered leaves blown by a fierce wind, her thoughts were flung, impotent, against the blank wall.

How long a time had been spent in this mental conflict she did not know. But, when the sound of an opening door roused her, she found that the room was gray. Half apprehensive, half desperately hopeful, she raised herself from her cushions, only to fall back in sickening disappointment. It was Allan's old nurse.

The woman came up to the settle with a long groan of compassion.

"Eh—to think of it! Eh—mam, the very day of homecoming and all!"

Anne stared through the dusk. What did she mean, this woman, with her croak of ill omen? Surely it was not possible, Allan could not have confided in her! There are situations beyond speech.

"I'd have come in before, mam," proceeded Mrs. Latham. She stood by the couch now, and the glow of the fire played upon her face, sadly discomposed from its pleasant serenity. "Only I did not like to intrude so soon after the young master's farewell."

Anne echoed the last word in a voice so hoarse that she hardly recognized it as her own. The odd, independent observer that dwelt somewhere in her brain, of whose existence she was aware only in moments of crisis, said to her now: "That is the voice of your grief. What a monster! What an unnatural monster!"

"Eh—it's a sore thing indeed to have to say farewell. You're taking on, and it's small wonder you should.

But you must keep up, mam, for his sake. For his sake. Ah, the look on his face!—'Take care of her, Nannie,' he says, his heart fair rent in two."

Anne had thought it unbelievable that her husband should have confided his trouble even to the woman who had nursed him at her knee; but here was something yet harder to credit—a vision of such illimitable agony that her outraged heart must cry against it to save it from breaking.

"Do not dare to tell me he has gone!"

She sprang up and straightened herself, tense and threatening.

"There, mam!—There, my dear young lady! There, you poor thing! And did you think he'd have come back for another good-by? Eh—maybe he let you think he would. Maybe he felt he could not bear any more himself. That's the way of men. Eh, but it's hard! They might have given him a few days for his honeymoon. My mind misgave me sore when I saw the yellow envelope with the black letters come out of the post bag, this very afternoon—what did you say, mam? Ah, yes, cruel! Cruel it is. But 'I've got my call,' he says to me. 'I've got to go. I leave her to you,' he says. 'She's your mistress now. Look after her, and give her this letter.' But I'll bring you a cup of tea first——"

"The letter!"

Anne had understood only this word, beyond the murderous fact. She stretched out her hand, and tremblingly the old woman put the packet into it. It was sealed and felt thick to the touch.

"I will go to my room," said Anne.

Walking away, up the stone stairs that she had trodden with such happy feet beside him but a few hours ago, she knew herself followed by the housekeeper. But of the ever more breathless consolations, no single word reached her brain. It was up and up—she remembered that—there was the stone passage, and yes, there stood the trunks. Through the open door of that chamber by the turret, which had been Allan's mother's, she saw Collins, scare-eyed, with a pile of garments in her arms. The room gave on the west—many windowed. It was flooded with a red light.

"Go away," said the bride. "I want to be alone."

"And it isn't as if he was off straight into the fighting," repeated Mrs. Latham, gaspingly, for the tenth time.

Anne shut the door in the faces of both the women, and pushed the old-time bolt. "Now you are alone," said the watcher in her brain. "Now you can take out your grief and look at it."

She let herself fall on a corner of the big, old-fashioned couch that stood at the foot of the four-poster. There were faded amber brocade curtains to the bed; and the couch had a loose cover of chintz, likewise faded, clean as a daisy, smooth as china. The atmosphere of the room was redolent of delicate fragrances, eloquent of elegancies and traditions. Allan had brought her into it, that forenoon—was it possible, only that very day?—and, in the silence that had come upon him then, she had felt the reverence with which he re-

garded her and the prospect of their life together: it had seemed to enfold her like incense.

But now she had no thought for the lost sweetness. All her energies were concentrated on the message from him; nothing mattered but that. She looked down at the superscription: Mrs. McClurg. It was the first letter she had ever received from him, and the first with his name upon it: Mrs. McClurg. So far she was that at least, his wife, by vow and by contract. Nothing had happened which could make it possible to break the one or annul the other.

She tore the envelope open. It had an enclosure and a sheet of paper written only on one side. And the lines were few—that was all he had to say to her: what was held in these few words! The writing wavered before her, her heart sank, and sank. "Yet you must read it," said the self that stood apart, outside her torment.

Allan began, without prefix:

I have just found this. Read it, then tear it up. It will have served its purpose. It gives me the opportunity of getting away. That is the only thing for both of us, that I should go. You, stay on here, till I have gone to France. That is my wish. As to the future, there must be a way out. The problem may be solved and that quite soon. Then nobody need ever know. Above all Aunt Grizell.

He signed with his initials, and added:

It is my wish that nobody shall know.

Lover, bridegroom, husband; he had gone from her.

There was nothing left. Minniglen was an empty, echoing shell, and the crimson sunset mocked her. There was nothing left, nothing, but these lines out of which harshness, bitter resentment, the most determined alienation struck at her.

She took up the enclosure, and read it dully. Somebody—it was dated from regimental headquarters, and somebody there—told him that the sooner he could come, the better pleased the colonel would be. "Things look pretty black, out there." And the letter ended.

Anne began to tear it up mechanically. "He told me to do this," she said to herself. Of the scraps she made a little pile on the shiny chintz, and then suddenly realized that she had destroyed his probable address. She spent ten minutes in piecing it together again; wrote it down carefully; then, gathering the fragments together, went to the hearth.

Here a small wood fire was flickering. He had perhaps ordered that for her himself; he, whose love was now more burnt out than last night's ashes. She watched the fragments flash and shrink into nothingness; then, after a moment's hesitation, flung his own letter after them. A phrase writhed out of it, at her: "It is my wish."

"Nothing left?" said the voice. "That is left."

She found herself laughing and was frightened. "I will go to bed," she thought. "I will sleep, and forget."

She had been traveling all night, and her bridegroom had been summoned away from her side on the day of homecoming; there could be nothing strange in her

wanting to go to bed with her grief; to be in the dark; to shut out that horrible sunset glow and all those phantom things that mocked her in the bridal chamber. Nobody was to know: that was his wish. She would ask for a cup of tea: people always had tea, no matter what their trouble was.

She rang the bell, unbolted her door. The women were in her chamber almost before she could step back. Knowing that she gave her orders with perfect calmness, she was irritated that they should look at her, and at each other, with such airs of meaning and anxiety.

"Would you like me to sit up with you a bit, mam," said the housekeeper, when Anne was in bed, "just in case you felt strange like?"

"No, thank you," said Anne. She spoke with studied politeness, because of an almost uncontrollable impulse to call the old woman a fool and fling the half-finished cup of tea at her head. "I want to be alone," she added distinctly, "quite alone."

She was obeyed. They left her quite alone, and in the dark, as she wanted. She lay, staring wide-eyed into the void. Solitude, darkness, and the void. That was the life spread before her. Lady Grizell had warned her: he was not one either to forgive or to forget, and the measure of her happiness had been the measure of her danger.

She knew what he had meant by that letter. Life itself was not long enough for his anger, the earth wide enough for their separation: he counted upon putting death between them. Death—the death of the soldier in the field. "That splendid fortune, that

grand way to die," as he, the man who was not Minniglen, had said to her. Allan would greet it now, leaving her the infinitely harder, immeasurably more cruel task of life. "What, churl! drink all and not a drop for me!" Oh, happy Juliet, happy Romeo—parted but to meet again with love kisses fresh upon their lips! From her, Allan had gone with a sneer and a glance of anger. Death itself could not give him back to her: so it would be to all eternity.

Thus the hours of the wedding night went by, for Anne McClurg. At times there came a wandering, from troubled slumber, or yet from the strain of besieged brain. Ever and anon she mixed up Duncan Cameron, the shepherd, and Allan McClurg who was Minniglen, and found herself reproaching her husband with the speech of another man's lips: "You said, Allan, you said that night——" And, each time, the return to realization was a renewed unendurable pang. Now she tried fiercely to cast the image of the face in the shelter, the echo of voice pitying and wise, the presence strong and calm, out of her recollection, as hateful; as an outrage to the creature of youth and fire and swiftness who was the real Minniglen; her lover, her husband. And yet again she found herself going back to the hour when her soul had been uplifted and a new, nobler vista of life had been presented to her as the only standpoint from which she could orient her future. What would he have told her to do now?

She must have slept at last—although, even in sleep, her thoughts never ceased to con the dreadful dilemma—

for she roused with a violent start. She sat up, her heart throbbing to suffocation, crying out:

"What is it?"

The light was filtering into the room through the curtains. A sound was in her ears, swelling, insensibly louder.

"Oh, my God, the pipes!"

The lilt, wild, mournful, passionate, a rhythmed cry of elemental humanity, a cry of fierce lament, of anger, of joy, old as the spirit of the race itself, yet young as the blood in the heart of its sons, now broke into pæan clamor below her window; and then still marching, still calling, still wailing and threatening, dwindled, slowly as it had grown, and died into silence.

Anne burst into tears—tears that may have saved her reason.

CHAPTER XXVI

IN the south, spring is past compare the most beautiful time of the year; but in Scotland autumn triumphs. Beyond all the bridal ecstasies of blossom and the happy shimmer of young green, beyond the summer carmines and purples of the heather are the golds of the fall in the north country. Even the barren hills are clothed in glory. There is no hint of decay; none of the creeping melancholy that rises from the rich wooded plains. Here, where the mother rock lies close beneath the soil, where birch and ash find root at sparse intervals on the slopes, they flame like pyres out of the noble bronze of the deepening heather. Here are no sluggish streams, turbid with rain, but leaping burns, amber, lucid, rejoicing in spate, laughing and bounding in their rocky beds. Here autumn is like a spendthrift, making great feast and clothing herself in magnificent raiment. The hour will come when the feast will be a dance of Death, when, naked and beggared, the last jeweled rag will have been torn from the wanton, but as long as the sun shines and the gold glitters the treasures are cast with both hands.

On this first day of September, when Anne McClurg found herself roaming the moors, the end was as yet far off. Only the most splendid opulence, the noblest extravagance was apparent. Glens and hills were golden with bracken, gold the lichens on the rocks, pale flame

of gold the birch, scarlet gold the wild cherry; with only the blue darkness of the marching pines and the velvet browns of the heather to throw the rest into relief. And, over all, the arch of a sky sapphire clear; airs sharp with the first hint of frost; exquisite to the taste, pure as rock water, intoxicating as fairy wine.

This was the world that Anne walked in: alone, save for the escort of the two laverocks, and the company of her thoughts. She had now been a fortnight in the solitude of Minniglen: and every day, the unnatural conditions of her life had become insensibly a little more natural—through that dispensation, the most melancholy and yet the most compassionate, which enables us to become accustomed to suffering. The least German of all poets has phrased the passage of a soul through indescribable agony, in lines of pregnant simplicity: "I said I could not bear it, yet I have borne it! Oh! never ask me: how?"

Anne had borne the unbearable. She never could have said how. Perhaps the attack of prostration and blinding headache, which had come upon her after Allan's departure, followed by days of weakness, almost of stupor, had helped her. A condition of physical pain, with intervals of drugged sleep, has at least this advantage, that it will keep the heart from breaking, the mind from utter distraction. Even when she had crawled back to a consciousness of herself and her position, her senses were mercifully blunted. It was only during the last three days since she had been up and about, that she had found again her dreadful burden in its entirety, and begun to shoulder its weight.

Before falling into that merciful illness she had had strength and wit enough left to send an answer to Allan's letter. One as short and as to the point as his own, which yet had an underlying piteous appeal.

I will do what you tell me. It is all I can do. One thing only I ask of you: not to go to France without letting me know, somehow. It is not too much to ask, since I am, after all, your wife.

ANNE.

She would have begged to see him again; she would have thought no words too humble with which to implore him, no assurance too ardent to conjure his doubts. But the sense of their uselessness—not pride, but a subtle pudicity of love—kept her silent: such a cry from her to him, feeling as he did towards her, could only offend.

The answer to this letter she now carried about her, day and night.

Yes. I can promise you that. ALLAN.

Not much for hope to fasten on, but it had brought some comfort to a heart so hungry. Though there was no relenting, no faintest hope of a meeting for what might be their earthly farewell, for the present, she could think of him as safe. There was a respite before the terrible day would dawn when every hour must hold its minute of mortal apprehension. And he had signed himself, Allan: in the first letter he had only put his initials. She had kissed the name, a hundred times. Night and morning she kissed it with a greet-

ing and a prayer. It was piteous enough to have only that; but it was something.

When she had begun to look upon her surroundings with re-awakened vision, she had soon realized that Allan's desire to keep their rupture a secret was not likely to be fulfilled.

In his hasty determination to cut the tangle of their difficulty at the root, he had thought, senselessly, that he had covered all possible scandal by the plea of military summons. But, putting aside the fact that all the young wives of the kingdom were following their husbands to the neighborhood of their new quarters, whether camps or barracks, the absence of any daily letter, of any interchange of message between the wedded pair of a day, must have made obvious to the most guileless inhabitant of Minniglen that something was gravely wrong.

Collins, in her very abstinence from comment, in her unwonted gentleness, betrayed how much she guessed. As for Mrs. Latham, her sudden avoidance of all mention of the master's name, her increasingly distant attitude, the air with which she regarded her new mistress in their daily intercourse—an air of gravity amounting to condemnation—showed that she had already passed judgment.

Anne felt this; but, with returning strength, gathered courage enough to face what had to be faced. Allan had wanted it hidden away; the breaking of that lovely thing, their solemn marriage vow. But it was already manifest. It was, doubtless, common talk about the place he loved, on the lips of his own people.

Nevertheless, if it was to be so, it should not be by her own fault. She would draw what wrappings of dignity she could over her wound; she would speak to his people and go forth among them with her head high. No one should tell him afterwards that it was she who had failed him.

This Minniglen, towards which her thoughts had strained so long as to some wild, earthly paradise, had become to her a very Gehenna. And yet, in no place could she have found so much alleviation to the first strangeness of her lot. Remote, solitary, tenanted only by the simplest creatures, here whatever was known or suspected there was no one to question her. Whatever had happened she was "the leddy" to them. Indeed, when she conversed with those who came across her path, they had a way of dropping their eyes, as if, in the Keltic delicacy of their soul, they would refrain from the sight of a trouble that could ill bear looking upon. She felt how she was spared, and it hurt her; but the broad and curious stare would have been intolerable.

That she had not to fear intrusion from any of her own class was another present clemency of fate. Even her supposed honeymoon condition would scarcely have protected her from Orchar Castle, she was well aware, had she not been doubly shielded by her own and Allan's want of appreciation of those great neighbors.

"Mr. Hanks, they say, has gone out with his old regiment," remarked Collins to her mistress, one morning. And Anne had had a shadowy flicker of humor in her tired brain, as she read, behind the words, her

handmaiden's thought: "How comfortable they might have been, had her young lady had but a grain of common sense! She would not have had long to put up with the poor young gentleman, after all, and might have ended by being the richest and the most unmourning of widows!"

Recent circumstances were little to that damsel's taste. Certainly they were not comfortable. Had she attempted to define them, they would have been summed up in the single word: queer.

The great movement which was drawing the youth of English-speaking peoples from every corner of the world towards the common goal of sacrifice, which had not spared the millionaire's family, was not likely to prove sterile at Minniglen. Lady Grizell had said: "He and all his men." The piper who had in his sunrise march round the castle seared Anne's heart with his screech of love and hate, had been silent the next morning. Mrs. Latham had apologized for this to the mistress. He was gone after the master. His pipes would carry many a Highland lad to gallant deed and death across the field of France, thought Anne, and prayed with clasped hands in an agony of supplication for her lost lover.

But the day of gold, when she found herself far strayed from the right of the little gray keep, away into the most secret cup of the hills, there was at first no agony in her soul. Nothing so violent could live out in the pure beauty of the hour, in the silence of the solitude, the serene mystery of the moorland. There was only melancholy about her; for it seemed to her

as if she must no longer fight the cruelty of her sorrow, but live with it. And in acceptance there is some kind of peace. There was one point that had long tormented her, which had become a kind of brain fatigue approaching the *idée fixe*, and that was a doubt of herself, of her real sentiment towards those two: the man she had dreamed about, and the man she had identified with him. Sometimes it appeared to her as if, even now, she could never separate them in her mind.

Duncan Cameron, the mad shepherd "gone on religion," the outcast kin of McClurg, surely it was not possible she loved him, had ever loved him. But, then, could she, in perfect truth, tell herself that she entirely and only loved Allan, when she knew him so little that, at every turn of memory, he seemed to be overlapped by a personality not his own? What she had sought in Allan, always, was that other man. If she turned, with a revolt of pride, from her cheated remembrance of the night in the mist, must not her pride revolt too from the monstrous self-deceit she had built up round an imaginary figure? In the actual, material world, she had lost both. Had she not lost them too in the finer, more subtle, infinitely more important realm of the spirit? And, as she reasoned, her heart cried out against her; lamented her lover just because he had been her lover. And she yearned for "the kisses of his mouth." Like the spouse in the Song of Songs, she "sought him and found him not." Yet he was set as a seal upon her heart.

So, between thought and feeling, she was driven to

and fro as a shuttle, and, even in sleep, the restless torment pursued her.

Under a sky so benign, held about as if in an amphitheater of beaten gold, sitting on a sun-warmed rock, while the two laverocks careered in wide circles through the heather seeking for scent, Anne came at last to a conclusion with herself. There were things which are beyond reason, feelings which baffle definition. The man she loved was not the Parsifal of the Grail, but the wild young Parsifal of the forest; not the man who had looked into her soul, but the man who had found her fair; not him whose mind had seemed to reflect heaven as the tarn the sky, but he who had strained her to his breast in passion and filled her with his own storm.

In finding herself, she found Allan more nearly than at any moment since their rupture. "Whatever happens," she said, "I will always have that to hold to, my only love." As for the other, a page read at random in a wise book, a sound of grave music caught through an open church door, let the recollection remain, it would never be anything more. And she prayed that she might one day, perhaps before he went to France, have an opportunity of telling Allan how it was with her. She thought she could convince him, now; she was so clear in her own mind, so sure of her own heart.

One of the laverocks suddenly gave tongue. Lifting her eyes, Anne saw a man's figure crossing the bronze heather, outlined against the pale flames of the bracken. Not for a moment could she mistake now—it was not

Allan, she knew that. Allan's double, then, it was.

Her first instinct was repugnance for the unexpected encounter. She had never foreshadowed it as possible: she had thought there was not a man of fighting age left on the estate.

She rose, with the intention of walking away; but a second impulse, and a strange, arrested her. Here was the test. Why should she avoid it? Would it not add an argument, the most convincing, to that explanation with Allan which should set everything straight between them? "I saw him again," she would say, "and I understood that nothing in him could ever have influenced my thoughts regarding you. I know now that I only dreamed that folly because I dreamed it round you!" And there sprang another emotion, an intense curiosity to see, to hear the real man; to know, to compare, and then to lay the ghost once for all.

So she stood, and watched him approaching. How could she ever have taken one for the other? True, here was the great height; here the lean, square form, the indefinable type of race. But he was coming towards her, and he had that slight stoop from the shoulder common alike to the student and to the worker on the land. And he walked with the long slouch of the Highlander; with those great strides, apparently indolent, which cover distance at an uncanny speed. The step of Allan still rang in the ears of the wife, as the very spring of youth, the tripping of the deer in the glen.

And, as the man drew nearer, dissemblance became even more startling in the very midst of startling simil-

itude. How much older, more austere; benign, serene yet mystic! The face she had seen in the short flicker of a match looked, in the broad searching of day, as unlike the face of her lover as the death mask to the countenance of life.

He fixed his eyes upon her; they had an immense indifference to their odd, pale fire. "Allan's eyes," Lady Grizell had said, "are McClurg eyes, 'the eyes that see.'" But when Allan had looked at Anne, his had been the gaze of a lover. Here were the eyes of the seer, indeed. She marveled at herself that she had once imagined these could kindle with ardor and blaze with the lovely, all-human flame of Allan's passion.

He strode down through the heather; close at his heel followed a yellow-orbed collie. His glance at Anne, for an instant, questioned, and then dismissed her. He raised his bonnet and was passing on when she arrested him:

"You are Duncan Cameron."

"Aye." He brought his attention back to her; and her heart quickened, for it was once again the regard that pierced, and sought, not the outward semblance, but the soul behind it. "You're Mistress McClurg. Can I be of any service to you?"

Anne shook her head. What could she say to him that would not seem a breach of Allan's trust? Nevertheless, so intense a longing came over her to unburden herself to him once again; so unreasoned, yet so penetrating a conviction, that he, who had helped her before, could help her now, that she dared not trust herself to speak, lest all escape her. The laverocks, who are of

all animals perhaps the most foolishly amiable, were approaching the newcomer with beautiful heads outthrust, and silken, plumy tails slowly wagging. But the collie at the shepherd's heel bared his young fangs, his great ruff bristling, his cairngorm eyes blazing green. His master turned and dropped a word in the Gaelic, and instantly threat melted into fawning submission.

The man lifted his bonnet again and moved away at his long stride, the sheep dog's nose just not touching his bare knee. Anne gazed after him with a bleak despair. It seemed to her that, once again, the merciful God had sent His emissary to the help of His forlorn creature; and this time she must let him go by and leave her in the mist, the darkness; in a solitude, a night of the soul worse than death.

She sank back on her rock, covering her face with her hand. A moment later, she felt his shadow upon her. He had come back and was standing before her.

"What is it?" she asked almost voiceless.

"I'm thinking you called me."

"Oh—but I did not call," she cried quickly. And then she heard him say, not in any tone of surprise, but as one confirming a previous impression:

"Aye. I was thinking we've met before. Oh, poor soul, it's in sorer need you are than ever. But I'm not clear——" He paused and went on again, pensively: "I'm not clear that a stranger can lead you, this day."

"No," said Anne, and the word sounded cruel to her ears. Did ever anyone want comfort, support, more than she did?

"Yet it would be queer, too, if I were sent across your path for no purpose. If the hairs of our heads are counted, what of our steps? With your leave, Mistress McClurg, I'll bide here a while; and, maybe, it'll be given to you what to say to me, how much it will be right for you to say to me. And it will be given to me what to answer."

He dropped on a boulder at a respectful distance, and his dog settled at his feet. The laverocks flung themselves down on their sides. Anne sat very still, with clasped hands, gazing at Duncan Cameron. How much did this man know of her trouble, or was it only that "he saw"?

For a while there was silence. She was taking her bearings; placing Allan and him in their new focus; marveling, recollecting, sifting and choosing, all the while conscious that some strength was going out from him to her, that was purely good and spiritual. At the same time, she was becoming profoundly aware of the cleavage between the two beings: and of the chasm that divided her emotions with regard to them.

This man, opposite her, was as remote from any possible thought of love as the rock on which she sat. She understood that, however he had seized upon her imagination, it was Allan, Allan only, who, when he had caught her to his breast, had laid a lover's hand upon her heart. She saw the shepherd, in his coarse homespun, with brawny knees; saw the dark, strong, sunburnt face, and the gray in the auburn at the temples; met his considering gaze, so gentle, yet so detached, cold as ice to her womanhood, kind only to the

soul that was to him as the strayed lamb. And she contrasted him with her foregone bridegroom; with Allan of the proud head and the haughty air, the jealous, implacable, beloved young tyrant. The resemblance between the two was not painful, not the agony of reminiscence it might well have proved; but something which, on the contrary, flung into relief their divergence.

Duncan Cameron did not seem inclined to be the first to speak. One hand supporting his chin, the other relaxed upon his knee, he sat, his eyes away over the marvel of heather and fern, of bronze and virgin yellow, to the distant line of hills, swooning amethyst against the heavens' blue. He was so still that he might have been one with the rock.

It was she who first felt the pause irksome:

"You have not joined up, with the rest," she said, abruptly.

He brought his eyes back, and contemplated her a moment before replying:

"You may well ask. It would be strange to be lagging when the trumpet has called so clear. I'm awa' the morrow. I had a bit work——" He stopped. A smile hovered about his grave mouth. "But I'll not trouble your ears with my concern."

"No—do tell me," she said. She wanted him to speak; she knew so little yet what, in his own words, it would be right for her to say. Perhaps, as he had put it, it would be shown her. Anyhow there was a kind of comfort in his mere presence.

"There were two or three things," he replied, as if

humoring her, "that had to be seen to. I have my ain place, and my ain land, and my flocks. Small it is, but my kingdom 'tis to me. And those that work for me, and those that come after me, hech, but I maun have all left in order for them, to go out with a free heart."

Perhaps Anne's gaze questioned. Perhaps, in his singular fashion, he read surprise in her mind; for she had always imagined him alone in the world. He added:

"Aye, you're right, there's nane that I can call my ain. I stand without kith or kin."

The color rushed into her face. Once more he considered her, with perhaps a shade of deeper thought upon his countenance, but no faintest sign of embarrassment.

"I see ye ken the old story. Nay, I'm no blaming folk for talking. You'd be bound to ask when you saw with your ain eyes the likeness."

"Oh," said Anne. She wrung her hands and bit back the clamor of speech.

He dropped his glance from her; and, bending, stroked his dog. It was an action full of delicacy; he could not know what caused an agitation so impossible to conceal, but he would shield the sight of it from his own eyes.

"Aye, it sets a man apart," he went on, without looking up, "when he carries such a stamp on his face. It minds him ever of the word: 'The sins of the father shall be visited on the children.' And it minds him to have his heart always ready with the pity, the com-

passion, when he himself, in his own flesh, is a testimony to human frailty."

"Do you take it like that!" she exclaimed, in a rush of bitterness. "Then it is very unlike what I know of the McClurgs! Hard, hard as the rock that lies here under the turf! Ah, you may forget the rock when you see the green, the proud fern, the clinging, tender things, but it is there! Strike it, you will meet it everywhere. Try and find a spot of real kindly earth, to hold you, to hide you, you cannot. It is there."

He did not raise his eyes; but the fondling hand paused. At last he said:

"Aye, I reckon it is a stiff-necked race. And the Lord knows what He's doing when He chasteneth us."

The answer angered her, for its inadequacy, its evasiveness as well as for its unpalatable moral. "What does he know?" she asked herself again. "Perhaps he regards me as Allan's scourge!"

"Ah!" she cried, "you and I talked that kind of thing over, once, didn't we? I'm afraid we are on roads that can never meet. I am only a poor human creature, with a poor human heart to feel with, and a human mind to measure by. If I thought there was a God who took pleasure in our suffering, who flung us out with all our longings, our inarticulate desires, into a lost world, blindfold, and then struck us for stumbling—'chasteneth us,' you called it—well, if I thought there was really that kind of God above us, I would hate Him. I would rather be the Devil's Disciple!"

She paused, palpitating, a sob in her throat. He was

looking at her so quietly, so unmoved, that it added to the exasperation of her tortured spirit.

"Ah," he remarked, contemplatively, "Shaw's phrase. 'Tis a dreary swamp yon will-o'-the-wisp would lead any soul into, if it followed him. You talk of a human heart? There is no wholesome feeling that fellow does not use his genius to make Devil's play with. We call the grand enemy of humankind many names, but no one ever described him so nearly, to my thinking, as he who made him say—aye, and that was a German:

" 'I am the Spirit that ever denies.' To deny, to drag down, to disintegrate—brutally, openly, as yon terrible tools of his are doing at this moment in that poor little country over there—or subtly, in words of beauty and in flashes of wit, destruction is always the stamp of the Devil's work. The Other, you may mind, went about doing good."

His voice that, up to now, had hardly been inflected from its natural note, here took a change which moved Anne so keenly, that the tears she was struggling against leaped to her eyes. She had heard her lover's accents grow husky when his innocent passion for her overwhelmed him; she had heard Lady Grizell's falter in maternal tenderness over the mere speaking of her boy's name; she had heard actors, orators and preachers; but she never yet had heard the praise of Christ on the lips of one who loved Him with a personal love. Here was the only being she had ever met to whom the things of eternity were the reality; the things of

the earth, shadows. It awed her, and, in reaction, she was angry with herself and with him.

"Have you not wandered from the point?" she exclaimed. "You should have quoted the text: 'Whom He loveth, He chasteneth.'"

The shepherd smiled, and Anne turned her vexed gaze away from the sight of that luminous sweetness.

"Yon's great comfort," he said.

"Oh!"

She stared at him. What was it Allan had called him? "A mad body, gone on religion." Why was she sitting there, listening to this cant? Would a text from Scripture assuage the hunger of her heart? the axioms of a fanatic staunch the wound of which she was bleeding to death? Yet she sat on; and, in spite of herself, she listened.

"Sorrow is your Father's hand upon you, and there is a many that would else forget they have a Heavenly Father, and a Home beyond. You have a bitter smile for that, Mistress McClurg; but I tell you the day has begun for this world when you will see—aye, you see it this hour—those from whom the Lord has removed His chastening, those that He has let alone to fulfill the desires of their arrogance. Long, long, have they denied Him and His Christ. Now Christ has denied them in His turn. The shadow of His Cross has gone from them. Maybe, nay, I think it is likely——" Duncan Cameron's eyes, filled with a light she thought almost that of insanity, gazed far beyond her. "I think it will be given to you to see the triumph of human evil fulfilled of itself. Hech, what a

vision of Hell! Dante saw none so horrible as the depths to which humanity abandoned of God can fall. Those other nations, bonny France, aye, and this England, we maun bear our cross, and thank God for the cross, being mindful with humble hearts that he shall not share in the Resurrection who has not stood on Calvary."

"Ah, it is because of that!" cried Anne. What was all the rest of the world to her, in her acrid private grief? "It is just because of all the horror that I cannot bear it! To have someone you love go, perhaps to his death—believing—not knowing——! Oh, I can't bear it! It could not be a good God to ask anything so cruel! Even a German would not——"

She hardly knew what she was saying. Her voice trailed off.

The unnatural fire went out of his eyes. He fixed them upon her with the old pity.

"I wudna' take upon myself to guess what is the root of your trouble, Mrs. McClurg. There's been a muckle talk about the place, how you and Minniglen parted within the hour he brought you hame." She made an inarticulate sound. He paused a moment and proceeded. "It is not for me to touch on that. Yet, if a man finds a poor creature bleeding to death, he must see if he cannot bind the wound."

Anne started. Her very thought!

"Partings," he went on, "can be no light things, nowadays, when the good-bys may be to eternity. There should be no liberty given to an angry word when the longing to unsay it may haunt a lonely life. There

should be no room for anything but love, the look, the speech, the thought of love, between two who have sworn to love till death do them part, and who, in such a mysterious dispensation as the present, may scarce have even the days of a moon to fulfill the sacred pledge."

Anne had been hanging on the words, in the frantic hope that the visionary, looking into her future, might foresee the hour of reunion; might, at least, drop a hint of comfort. He talked of staunching her wound —what was he doing, but tearing it open afresh?

"Stop! you torture me! Is it my fault? What can I do? I am so helpless——"

She let herself slide, prone on the turf; and casting her arms across the rock, hid her face against them. One of the laverocks came and sniffed at her; then, his comrade summoning him, after the mysterious fashion of dogs, both roamed away into the heather. The shepherd remained silent, his collie at his feet. Stillness became intensified about them: the only sounds were the cry of the whaup overhead, the humming of a bee over a belated flower of ling. At length she turned her pale face upon him again; tears were dripping down it, but she did not know it.

"You helped me once, or I thought you did," she said in an extinguished voice. "But you can't help me now. No one can, and I don't know what to do."

"There'll be a great worth in a love that holds so much sorrow." Her wet gaze questioned, half-wistful, half-impatient. "There maun be great worth in a love so tested." He repeated his singular pronounce-

ment with an emphasis on the variant. "He that never spoke an idle word said: 'Blessed are they that mourn.' Aye, and how does it end, the promise? 'They shall be comforted.' That's a promise to rest on. There's more in it, though. You must not be too impatient, nor want to pass on too quickly. Blessed are they that mourn."

He stopped, fixed her intently, then asked her, suddenly:

"Wad ye be as those that canna mourn—The light o' loves—those whose hearts are like the bad ground He spoke of; where the seed of love springs only to wither away, or is choked with the tangles of the vanities of this world? Would ye change with one of these puir creatures that scarce have souls at all?"

Anne thought of Pen, of Cordelia Brooksbury, and all the chattering carnival. No, she would not change! Yet his argument seemed to her strained. She could not see its application.

"Why should I suffer?"

"Aye, why? We've come back to the point of the circle. God forbid that I should lay every suffering at His door, He who created man for happiness from the beginning. Perchance ye maun expiate for yourself—or for another. Perchance your suffering is another's fault; but you've got to bear it as best you may, both for yourself and for him. To bring good out of evil: that is where God comes in."

He got up, as he spoke those last words; and she dragged herself to her feet, too. Was this his message? Was this all?

"What shall I do?"

She was standing straight before him, gazing up at him like a child. He must show the way, she had suddenly an unreasoned, an overmastering conviction that he could.

For a spell, he made no answer. With eyes half closed, motionless like the granite about him, he seemed to be communing with himself. When he turned at last his gaze upon her, the flame which, a little while ago, she had thought that of madness was once more in it.

"The legend says that a woman stood on the way, and wiped the blood and sweat on His face as He went by. This is the great passage of the Cross. Dinna ye be like the wailers that beset Him wi' fruitless lamentation. Get ready to be a Veronica. He'll come to you in the shape of every puir wounded lad that ye meet. Be ready to bind His wounds. Learn how to touch the broken bodies. Maybe——" She thought his gaze unendurable, yet could not detach hers from it. It seemed to be piercing through her soul to some mystery of trial that was not yet, but which she knew was hers. "Maybe," he went on, "the day will come when he that falls to your care will be——"

She interrupted him with a cry:

"Oh, no! Oh, don't say that! Oh, Allan——"

At this he gave her his extraordinarily sweet smile. It lifted the menace from her heart, like a ray of pure light. More through that clarified peace on his face than through his words, did hope revive. What he said was:

"Why are you so fearful? There'll be mony a High-

land lad that'll lie in alien land; but Minniglen will come back to the heather. And there'll be ane Duncan Cameron who had no right to his life, to whom the very blood in his veins was a reproach, day and night—to him God will grant a fine end: even to lay down the one and shed the other. He had nane to love him; and there'll be nane to mourn him. And I canna see as much as a cross over his unblessed grave. But in the soul of him, he was never a bastard, but son to his Father in Heaven and poor brother to Christ."

While speaking these singular words, before turning away, he seemed already at an immense distance from her, as if wrapt in some mystic place in which her mortal eyes could scarcely behold him.

She watched him stride over the heather, at his long, looping gait, the sheep dog at his heel; then she sat down on her rock and began to cry again, not only for herself and the sorrow of life, but for him.

Yet the bitterness had gone out of her tears, and the memory of his smile, so austere, so gentle, so unearthly, haunted her like an infinitely sad melody.

CHAPTER XXVII

ANNE walked back to the castle, with a sense of invisible comradeship, in a kind of peace. She was no longer at odds with herself, the tormenting ebb and flow of imagination had subsided; she had a hope to cling to.

As she crossed the threshold of the single door, she repeated, half aloud, the phrase that kept ringing in her heart: "Minniglen will come back to the heather." "Oh, he will come back!" she thought and remembered the hour when she had first stepped into his house; when, with his arms about her, he had taken her up these stairs. It was here he had kissed her, just on this very spot, and had said: "You—you and Minniglen!" Ah, he had loved her, then. She had heard the echo of his heart-beats in his voice.

The illusion of nearness to him was so strong that it overcame her with a kind of faintness. The door of the great living room was ajar; a leaping glow of firelight painted itself rosy on the stone. As a rule, she was as little in there as possible: the place was haunted by the specter of the hour of terror and disruption. But she went in, now, and sat down on those cushions, where he had held her against his breast. "One day he will be here again. There will be nothing between us but love, the love we promised each other."

She sat, and dreamed, staring into the crimson cav-

ern under the crossing logs, at the yellow flame that licked their sides, and danced, striving upwards like a living thing. She began to plan what she would say to him. The fault, from the outset, was that she had been too secret, or, rather, too shy of her innermost feeling to tell all that was in her heart for him. It would not have mattered, then, when both were still uncontracted, if her mistake had been brought to light. At least it would have mattered in a way so different as to be capable of prompt repair. She could have proved to him, being still free to prove, the essential unimportance of her delusion. It could even be conceived that, before many days had passed, they might have laughed at it together. After this initial error, she had made blunder after blunder. How had she not held him close, when he put her from him? Could she not then, by the living truth of her kisses, have blotted out the phantom falsehoods her lips had uttered? How had she let him go out of her arms? When he had stood there—there, so close to her—and turned upon her his face, all drawn and stricken and angry, his dear, boyish face, and she had seen the blood drop from his hand—how was it she had not fallen at his feet and clung to him? How had she ever let him go from her, out of the room? Oh, fool, fool, to have sat on, there, the whole fatal hour, each minute of which might have given him back! She had been angry, too, in her misery. She had had thought for pride, for dignity, she who had hurt him so subtly, so deeply!

What was she to do now? What should keep her from seeking him?—he had not yet gone to France,—

what, but the sense of his implacable will rising against her presence, and her own unreserved promise of submission? She could not go—but she could write! He had not forbidden her that.

She sat up, in her turret room, half the night writing.

Allan, [the letter began,] I have met this Duncan Cameron again, and I know, now, that had there been but one man, of you two, and had Duncan Cameron been, as I thought, Minniglen, there never would, there never could have been thought of love between us. No woman could have loved him, or ever will. As soon think of love with a Francis of Assisi. Some people called St. Francis mad, as you called this shepherd mad. But others thought he showed them the way to heaven. Allan, my darling—it was you I loved, from the moment you caught me when the train came rushing at us. I wanted to die, then, because you held me to you. Love was born between us then—for you, too, have told me that you loved me from that moment. And you have never spoken but the truth. Oh, neither have I to you.

She let her heart overflow.

Allan, Allan, it was always only you! It will always be only you, so long as anything of me lives on, for all eternity.

As she wrote she felt so overwhelmingly the strength of her own conviction that it seemed to her certain to sweep doubt from Allan also. With fevered cheeks and fast beating heart, she let her pen fly. "I will not," she said to herself, "keep one thought hidden from

him. I will write as I would speak, were he here now. And—oh, dear God!—when he reads this he will understand. There shall not be a shadow of deception between us, not the shadow of a reservation. And surely he will feel able to build up love again on a foundation of truth so absolute."

The sway of human love upon the whole being is complete tyranny: it claims undivided service. The meeting of that day, in the golden cup of the hills, and the strange teaching that had been given her, were, for the moment, blotted from her mind. She was entirely given over to her earthly passion. If she prayed the Heavenly Father, it was just to grant her that taste of paradise on earth—reconciliation with Allan before he went away, before it might be too late. She would have bartered her salvation for his kiss.

She closed her letter with a wild appeal.

Let me see you again. Give me a day, an hour! Come to me here, or bid me come to you anywhere.

An immense fatigue came on her after she had signed. She stood a moment looking at the pages, and knew that she could never bring herself to read them. That, if she did, she would begin correcting; and, in the end, it would never go at all.

She folded the letter, quickly, against the sick reaction which haunts every immense emotion; addressed, and sealed it away from herself. Then she crept into bed, calling upon oblivion.

She awoke late; sunshine was pouring into the room. Her first thought was for the letter. Something

stronger than the whispers of her fastidious, shrinking nature, a fear that here was her last chance, a fear colder than the morning chill of discouragement, urged immediate dispatch. "I will drive in, and register it myself at Inverwarroch," she determined; and rang the bell.

Collins appeared with the breakfast tray—lonely Anne took what meals she could in her own room—and, after commenting on her mistress's unusually long sleep, announced casually that there was a letter for her, brought by the factor who had picked up the post on his way back from seeing off his son.

Anne took up the unexpected courier, and, as she saw the handwriting, fell to trembling. For a minute she sat, unable to do anything but just stare, stupidly. "Mrs. McClurg, Minniglen, Inverwarroch"; the words jigged through her brain. Then she became aware that her maid was speaking; she could not understand what the girl was saying, but the sound of her voice was intrusive and she ordered her out of the room.

Now she could read. Suddenly, the horrible second self that dogged her hours of calamity began to address her, with distinctness: "You will have to move out of that ray of sunshine. It is dazzling. Sit down. It is always better to sit down when you are about to read bad news." The other Anne, the helpless, suffering Anne, woke, and protested. "Perhaps it is good news. Perhaps he, too, felt as I did, that love is beyond everything. Perhaps he feels it would be too cruel to go away without seeing me again." Her pleading faltered and withered before a negation that was now

without words. She sat down and opened the letter. It seemed to her, afterwards, that her sense had, at that moment of crisis, become so sharpened that even before her eyes had fallen upon the lines, she knew the very words of his farewell.

When you get this, I shall be in France. Good-by, Anne.

Good-by, Anne. She found herself standing, a numbed creature; detached thoughts drifted fitfully through her brain like wrack upon a leaden sky. Was it because she was hurt beyond bearing, that she had ceased to feel at all? She hoped it might be so with the poor soldier lying out wounded. Would Allan ever lie out wounded? Perhaps he would think of her, then, and how he had written, "Good-by, Anne."

"Good-by, Allan," she whispered.

She began to move idly about the room. What a beautiful day! She had meant to drive into Inverwarroch. There was no need to do that, now. "When you get this, I shall be in France." Yet, if she posted the letter, it would be sent after him.

She hesitated. He would certainly not put it from him unread; and, however unforgiving, however harshly unmoved towards her it might leave him, would it not come back to him in an hour between life and death? But the next doubt sprang from the very deeps of her love for him. What if it only brought him trouble in the supreme moment? "If he does not turn to me of himself, on the brink of eternity, it will be that he has ceased to be able to love me. Then my letter will have grieved his soul in vain."

All at once, a thought formed itself, fraught with such horror that her hair rose on her head. What if Allan meant never to come back! "Good-by, Anne." That was a final word. With both hands pressed to her forehead to still the loud throbbing of her pulses, she tried to recall every word of that first letter of his, which she had burned. "There must be a way out. The problem may be solved." She had taken these words to mean that he wished for death, that he would welcome death. Now, his resentment turned a new face towards her, darker, fuller of menace than her worst misery had painted it. Why had he written "Good-by, Anne"? Could he be contemplating the dreadful purpose of deliberately throwing away his life?

"What am I to do? Oh, what am I to do?" She seemed to be standing on the edge of some black chasm: the least movement might precipitate her in it. How could she write of an apprehension so awful? And, if she wrote, must it not be even as in last night's outpourings, with love, and anguish, and pleadings beyond measure? And Allan, who could not forgive; Allan, whose mind would become set, immovable, when once it was made up, what if such a letter from her only hastened the catastrophe?

At this moment, when all her interlacing sorrow seemed to have gathered into a single point of anguish, comfort came to her—the echo of a voice that had said, "Minniglen will return to the heather." And the same voice went on at her ear. It was like the broadening of a strip of blue heaven between thunder clouds. "You must have patience. You must not be in too

great a hurry." That man, who saw, who walked with Christ; who called himself, in accents of such shining certainty, "the poor son of my Heavenly Father," did he not speak with authority? Might she not rest on it, all the more safely that it condescended to no human indulgence?

Warmth crept back to her frozen heart. If Duncan Cameron were mad—as Allan had called him; as she herself had momentarily thought him—then all the saints throughout the ages had been mad; then all the lovely messages they had left, all the priceless legacies of faith, hope and charity, were the maunderings of madness. Nay, the whole supernatural structure on which rises everything that is sacred and good in humanity, had madness for its base. For if the followers of Christ are mad, what shall be said of Christ Himself?

Her eyes turned towards a crucifix which had belonged to Lady Magdalen, and hung over her writing table—strange relic of the old faith to have found its way back within the walls of a Highland castle. On the blotter beneath it lay her letter. Slowly Anne went over to the table; and there, folded together Allan's dreadful message of farewell and her own sealed appeal into a single packet. Then she stood, looking up at the pale image of suffering and pity. The first prayer she had ever made to the Redeemer as to a living personality rose to her lips now before this figure of death.

Oh, Thou who dost hang there so patiently. I will have patience. See, I hide these letters, with all my hopes,

secretly away. One day, grant that I may put them into his hands. Until then, oh, give me strength!

As if an invisible power were gently pressing her, she went down on her knees. She was beginning, oh, so feebly! with, as it were, but a faint glimmer of light, to understand something of the power of the soul; the strength, the worth, the grandeur which it might achieve through self-denial, through renunciation. *Blessed are they that mourn!* It was a hard saying. It appalled human weakness; it cut the poor heart that loved, as with a sword. *They shall be comforted.* That was the sweetness. The whole of the sayings of Christ had the same singular dual message, smote with this double edge, swung this tremendous pendulum of sacrifice and ecstasy. *He that loseth his life shall save it.* All was summed up in that. It meant—Duncan Cameron had said this to her, too, on their first meeting—"Whatever is taken from the flesh is given to the spirit." And, at the end, looking upon Him who called Himself God, dying the felon's death upon the cross, Christianity cried out in triumph: *"O Death, where is thy sting!"*

But Anne was bound with all the ardor of her earthly nature to an earthly love. She quailed at the thought of sacrifice. She prayed, prayed piteously, that her husband might be restored to her.

One of the long procession of thoughts that had passed through her mind that morning, had wounded her as it went. She had hardly realized how much, at the time; but now she was conscious of it, as though of an

inner bleeding. If Allan were to lie out, wounded. Every day the papers gave lists of names, and each of those short printed lines spelled the agony of a home, the sweeping away from this earth of some lovely youthfulness, some bounding life of vigor and joy, some power of good; the blotting out of so many sacred, natural hopes bound up in it all. What if she should also read that Allan was wounded—missing! She supplicated, with hands outstretched: "Have pity!"

And it seemed to her that pity looked back at her from the cross.

CHAPTER XXVIII

was with a strange mixture of feelings that Anne
McClurg left Minniglen.

In one sense it seemed as if she were cutting
lf adrift from the last tie that bound her to Allan.
on the other hand, London would bring her nearer
m. She would more easily be within reach of a
ions. And hopes, based on nothing more substan-
han the prophetic words of the scholar-shepherd,
beginning shyly to push into existence.

ere is nothing more pathetic in our human nature
the effort we all instinctively make to re-establish
quilibrium, and reset the delicate balance of opti-
in the days of deepest trouble. When the cer-
y is irreparable, there is still the effort to fling
lation in the empty scale. "Better than a long
s, that it should have been sudden." Or it may
"It was a happy release." Or yet the spiritual
: "Do not grudge them their happiness."

ter so many weeks of misery the long dreaded blow
'allen. Allan, unreconciled, had gone to the front.
found herself still erect; nay, full of a new cour-
She wanted it all, that morning, as she looked
in farewell, upon the gray castle.

was a day of mild winds and desultory mists. With
bsence of sunshine, the gold and color had sunk
from the Highland world. The hills were

wrapped away in gray veils; the bracken was sodden brown, the heather sullen black. Minniglen tower itself looked ghost like, with vague outline, gray against gray. How full of plans she had been, on that sun-steeped August morning when she had made the enchanting journey through the glens by Allan's side! Allan's desert garden was to have blossomed like the rose: flowers against the old stone were to have been but symbols of their own young joy of life, expanding, in fragrance and color, in this haunt of ancestral memory!

But fate had so tricked her that she had never taken root in Minniglen; and now she was as one cast out. Yet it was better to be gone than to remain upon unhomely sufferance. She had never shifted a piece of furniture, or given an order, save a personal one, or paid a bill within those walls. "Is it your wish, mam, that I should hand over my charge to you?" Mrs. Latham had asked, standing before her, very formally, on the first morning when Anne had been well enough to rise, after her illness. The housekeeper had held a basket of keys, which shook with a certain tremor of respectful disapproval as she spoke. "No, please," Anne had answered without a moment's hesitation, "I should like everything to go on exactly as before."

"Everything" included, Anne discovered, to her relief, a banking account for household expenses, with plenary powers to order and pay, to engage and discharge. Estate matters were, of course, under the control of a factor.

The sum of money which Anne was officially informed had been placed to her credit at a local bank, she had

never drawn upon. She never would draw upon it, so long as only this mockery of wifehood endured. Since he had wished her to remain at Minniglen she had eaten of his food and slept under his roof. Her pride would not allow her to accept anything else.

She was now starting in the world once more with Jane's wedding present of a hundred pounds, and her own seventy pounds a year. It would be enough for the new existence. In a week she was to enter a military hospital as a V.A.D. Jane, just back from Ireland, had written so kindly to urge a return to the flat, that she could not refuse her presence there for a few days, painful as it would be to find herself under the gaze of her aunt's unsuspecting but constitutionally probing eye. As for Collins—there was no room for a maid in the new life—she had left the week before. It was a great relief to be alone.

When the folds of the swathed hills hid the last view of the turrets from her gaze Anne turned her face towards the outstretching road, with a little lift of the heart, as of the flutter of new wings of liberty. Straight in front, she knew, Ben Nevis towered and frowned; but this day he was lost to sight. The threat of his shadow had been fulfilled, after a fashion undreamed of. She had no fear left of him.

Yet her spirit shrank as from a startling omen of evil, when she found the little station of Inverwarroch draped in black, and the meeting place of a small excited throng:

Lady Weyford was dead, the porter informed her, with an air of interest amounting to gusto. Was it

possible Mrs. McClurg had not heard? Well, it had, in truth, taken all by surprise here.

"Aye, she's dead, poor leddy. Unco sudden. And twa of his lordship's secretaries, with half a score of London undertakers, cam' up by the night mail to get everything ready. It is her leddyship's fancy to be buried in Glenorchar."

The man further announced that the train, with her ladyship's corpse, was expected in the afternoon; and seemed to think it a pity that Mistress McClurg could not put off her own departure to share in the pageant. His lordship wished for a lying in state, in the great hall.

The first unreasoned anguish which the mortuary appearance of the station had brought to Anne's easily troubled mind, merged in a sense of compassionate, weary amusement as she looked out of her third-class carriage window upon the bustle of funeral preparation. The bereaved husband was giving rein to the love of display which was his ruling passion; no doubt as the most convincing expression of his grief.

At the top of the sable curtain already voluminously draping the walls of the waiting-room, Lady Weyford's initials, surmounted by a coronet of silver, shone forth in heroic proportions. That was the last thing the traveler marked, as the train drew her away.

At Fort William, she bought a paper. There was no military news of fresh moment to her. The lists of casualties among officers included none of Scottish regiments. The tone of the leading article was optimistic; Russia was making her presence felt. The death

of Lady Weyford was prominently announced. Anne read that she had passed away, quite unexpectedly, at a nursing home, after a successful operation.

Great sympathy, [the paper went on to say], is felt with Lord Weyford and his family. The only son, the Hon. Sidney Hanks, is in France, with his regiment, and it is not anticipated that he will be able to return for the funeral which is to take place at the beautiful little church built by Lord Weyford on his Glenorchar estate. The deceased lady was widely and deservedly popular, nowhere more than in the Highlands, for which she had a special affection. But indeed it is not too much to say that there and elsewhere, no charitable organization or other work for the benefit of the country was left unsupported by her generosity.

Anne felt sorry, distinctly, yet with detachment, that this affliction should have fallen on the family which had at least one merit, a whole-hearted devotion for each other. Poor Sidney, he loved his mother—the mater, as he would call her. And how she loved him! Anne remembered the look in the mother's eyes when she had spoken of her son to her; and the resentful glance the poor lady had cast, the last time they had met, upon the unnatural creature who could have rejected "her Sid."

Lady Weyford, round and vermilion as a pillar box, with a sheaf of red ospreys in a red toque; what a farewell vision to have of her! So, now she was dead—flung, in an hour, almost, from her opulent importance, from her high post above the chattering sycophantic

circle, to the awful level of the grave! And the soul that had sat so smugly in self-satisfied luxury, propped on a benevolence—at best good-natured, a calculated social investment for the most part, at no time entailing any sacrifice—Lady Weyford's soul, what of it? How would it stand before the Judgment Seat, shivering with a consciousness of abysmal poverty? No, Anne could not imagine Lady Weyford's soul anything but fat and comfortable. "I have been a moral woman," it would state. Anne could still hear the tone in which she had declared of her husband: "Oh, that has been a moral man!"

Well, it was a comfort to recall the promise: *In my Father's house there are many mansions.* She did not think Lady Weyford's house of bliss would suit her at all. "I hope," she thought with a kind of weary humor, "she is able to look down on Inverwarroch Station, and how she would enjoy the lying in state! How poor Sidney would hate it all!"

Jane Joscelyn greeted her niece with as much affection as it was in her to display; that is to say she gave her two pecks on each cheek, instead of one; and said, three times over, "Well, my dear, this is very nice."

But when they sat together over that cup of tea which was all Anne could look at, and Jenny and the porter could be heard bumping the trunk down the passage, Jane suddenly fixed her visitor, and exclaimed with some tartness:

"I can't say you look as if marriage had agreed with you."

Anne knew that her color was changing.

"It isn't a time when anyone can feel very happy."

"You mean, I suppose, because your husband is at the front."

"What else could I mean?"

"You might mean a great many other things, my dear."

Jane paused, pressing her lips together and staring very hard with opaque black eyes at her companion. At last she said:

"I think it's very silly to keep up unnecessary pretense. In fact pretense ought never to be necessary. So I am going to tell you straight out that I heard you and that young man did not get on at all; and that you, very sensibly, decided to part."

Anne was so utterly surprised that she remained open mouthed, looking helplessly back at her aunt.

"And now," proceeded Jane, as if the matter was concluded, "you and I can start quite comfortably again, without any ridiculous mystery between us. I don't want to discuss anything painful. Such things always are painful. Marriage is a great toss up. I am very glad I steered clear of it. And——"

Here Anne interrupted.

"One might have thought," she said bitterly, "that people had other things with which to occupy their minds, now-a-days, than gossip about my poor concerns."

She had felt herself shut away from all the world at Minniglen, no whisper out of it had reached her in her solitude. She had thought the secret safe within that circle—Allan had wanted it to be kept—and, at the

very first stage of her new life, it was made impossible for her to fulfill the one charge he had laid upon her. Anger and pain were in her heart. "We can now get on quite comfortably," said Jane.

"My dear," ejaculated the little lady, slightly flustered. "Did you imagine nobody knew? Even if it had not been for the extraordinary procedure of Mr. McClurg, abandoning you alone at Minniglen, when you could quite well have got a nice little cottage together near the camp, you apparently forget that you ordered your maid to come here with some of your luggage. Of course the first thing she told my Jenny——"

"Oh, Aunt Jane!" Anne crimsoned.

"I know, my dear, I know. Servants' gossip, I don't like it myself. But Jenny's a good little girl. And I'm alone in the flat with these two. I can't shut my eyes and ears. And, anyhow, you know my theories about the education of women. If I don't do my best with my own girls, how can I guide other people? That silly Maggy—my little cook, dear,—has got some ridiculous notion in her head about the grocer's young man. I should have blamed myself if I had not taken the occasion to illustrate the danger of these hurried war marriages."

Anne uttered an exclamation between a laugh and a sob. She got up and went to the open window, and looked out over the night haze pointed with myriad dim lights. Jane went on behind her back, speaking a little louder.

"You know, my dear, you never consulted me. And, if you remember, in that letter I wrote to you from

Ireland, I refrained from expressing an opinion. But I thought your choice most unsuitable. The other man—Mr. Sidney Hanks—he was a nice young man. I see his mother's dead, poor thing. She was dreadfully vulgar, I'm told. But I'm sorry she's dead, for she might have been very useful to the cause, if someone had shown her her duty as a woman. All that money, Anne——"

She stopped, for Anne had come back to her chair, and was saying:

"Please don't let us talk about it any more, dear Aunt Jane. It was a misunderstanding. It—it was my fault, he was not to blame. Oh, no, it was my——" Her voice faltered, "my mistake."

Jane looked into the teapot and replenished it unnecessarily with hot water. Then:

"We'll say no more, my dear. I quite understand," she said. "You've been very sensible. Of course, it's all very painful. He rushed you into it. What did I call him? The young savage of the glen, aha! You found you made a mistake. That was a pity, of course, but it would have been a far greater mistake if you'd gone on with it. Aha!—Have another cup of tea."

"No, thank you," said Anne. "I am so tired. I think I must go to bed."

"Well, yes. You do look tired. I hope you'll be strong enough for nursing. I quite approve of that scheme. And if you'll follow my advice of resting regularly after meals, for fifteen minutes——"

Anne had already moved out of the room. Miss Joscelyn looked after her with some exasperation.

"Dear me, she's just the same as ever! Anyone else would think her dreadfully rude. I can't say the state of affairs is satisfactory. Dear, dear, I wish I had insisted on her going to Ireland with me!"

The conscientious little spinster was really disturbed in her mind; and, about half an hour later, clad in a coquettish gray, quilted dressing-gown, her black hair bristling at the temples with "Hind's Curlers," she opened Anne's bedroom door with precaution.

"My dear! You've not even begun to undress! Sitting there, on the window sill! And you said you were so tired! My poor dear Anne!" Miss Jane went up to her niece and put an affectionate arm round her shoulders, "you must not take things to heart like this! Pray remember that things are very different from what they used to be. You've never taken the woman's movement seriously, but it's an established fact, after all. And it's going to be the greatest epoch in the history of mankind since the coming of Christianity. In another couple of years, my dear,—for I believe, dreadful as the war is, it will rather help than retard our cause—the present position of women in the eyes of the law will be a thing of the uncivilized past. The ring on your finger, Anne, will no longer be the symbol of slavery. Man and woman shall stand equal before the world as they do before God. And divorce, honorable divorce——"

Anne sprang up.

"Aunt Jane,—oh, Aunt Jane, for heaven's sake! You'll drive me mad. Divorce! Do you think I want divorce? I, divorce Allan! Oh, my God!" She broke

into laughter which ended in wild sobbing. "Do you think I sent him away, that it was my wish he should leave me! I tell you, Aunt Jane, I'd go through England on my knees, there's nothing in the world I would not do if I thought it would bring him back to me. Do you think I want to get rid of him—I, who can scarcely draw a breath knowing him out there, in daily danger? You call my wedding ring a badge of slavery—my blessed ring!" She kissed it passionately. "No one can take it from me. He gave it to me, put it on with his own hand. It shall go with me to my grave. It is all I have got. Oh, Allan, oh, Allan!"

She flung her arms against the wall, and hid her face upon them.

"My goodness," said Jane, shocked. But after a long pause she asked, in an unwonted tone of timidity: "But then, my dear, why?"

Anne detached herself, wheeled slowly about, and gazed at her with a look of such blank misery that the little lady suddenly overflowed with tears herself.

"Oh, my dear, this is dreadful. Dreadful—Where is my handkerchief? But it can't be allowed to go on a moment longer. Of course," said the suffragette guilelessly, "I know nothing at all about marriage. But if you feel like this—it's perfectly absurd to think," said Jane, stiffening, "that the young man could have anything against you. The whole thing is a ridiculous misunderstanding."

"Aunt Jane," said Anne—she gathered herself together and now spoke firmly—"I cannot tell you anything about it, you must not ask me, for I never will.

And I forbid you," cried Mrs. McClurg, with a sudden flash of imperiousness, "to say one word about it to Lady Grizell, or to write to her!"

"You forbid me," echoed Miss Jane, flushing.

"I implore you. Promise me, dear Aunt! She's never written me one line. And I have been glad of it. I couldn't write to her. And—oh—there's another reason. Aunt Jane, you would not be so unkind."

She was so agitated, turned upon her relative a countenance of such distress and apprehension, that the latter testily agreed.

"Very well, my dear. Have it your own way. Grizell will hear of it herself. And think it very odd of me. I can't imagine what your mystery is, and why you should want to make one.—Especially," she added with her dry laugh, "as you are not able to keep the fact itself from common knowledge. You are behaving rather like an ostrich. Aha! Good-night."

She sniffed; kissed her niece; went to the door, and there paused.

"Don't fret, child," she said then with a hurried, shame-faced tenderness. "I've got a sort of feeling—I'm sure—it will all come right."

Anne had this grain of comfort. It was not much of itself but it tallied with the treasured words which Duncan Cameron's lips had spoken. Two such different human creatures, to say the same thing—must there not be truth in it? When every earthly stay has broken away, the desolate must even turn and catch at those intangible aids which come, or seem to come, from the world invisible.

The next morning brought Anne a letter from Lady Grizell from her hospital in France.

I have just heard, [it ran], that Allan has started for this side—your moon is over, poor child! I am sending this to Jane's address, as you will probably be in London, having seen your soldier off. Anyhow she will know where to find you. My heart tells me you will settle at Minniglen. He will like best to think of you there; and you will like best to be there, for his sake. It will be better for you, too, to occupy yourself with a hundred dear home duties. That garden, Anne! This is the very month to begin operations. You are not the kind of woman to haunt the War Office, forestalling bad news; or to rush out into the street after every newspaper, cultivating torment, and ruining your nerve. You will be strong and calm, knowing that Allan is where he ought to be, and that you bear half his burden in shouldering your own. For the rest we are neither more nor less in God's hand in war than in any other time. And you know in Whom to put your trust. Anyhow, they are not likely to be in the firing line for some time yet. I shall probably be able to see him before that, and will let you know exactly how he is, and how he looks; and what he says—which latter will not take long. My silent boy has been more silent than ever, since he carried you off. But that is only what I expected, and you must not imagine that I misunderstand. Neither do I misunderstand your own silence, my dear; though I may say I would have liked it less absolute. This is not a reproach; only a tiny growl! It is quite likely Allan did not want you even to write. Your one month together, and—well, I warned you he would be a jealous husband! But now, if you are not too much absorbed in your daily correspon-

dence with him—write to me. And that, very often, please. I must keep in touch with my children; more than ever. I have written to Allan's Colonel, and I know he will let me know, should there be anything to know; and you will feel happy to think I am near the spot. May God bless you! Ever your loving,

AUNT GRIZELL.

As Anne read, every kindly sentence lacerated. It was intolerable that Lady Grizell should be in ignorance; should still be trusting; still believing in the complete happiness of their union. She had hoped that the long silence had meant that Allan had altered his intention and told his aunt the truth; or yet that the rumors had reached her ears, too; that she had questioned and found out. It would have simplified things had it been so. Anne could quite conceive how this woman might feel toward her who had failed her idol.

"I must answer her," thought the girl, miserably. "What shall I say, what can I say?" Suddenly a hope sprang so eager, that it hurt. If that meeting should take place that Lady Grizell looked to, the secret could scarcely be kept. At any rate she might show the letter—the letter Anne meant to write, a letter the meaning of which Allan could not for a moment mistake. She had so desperately sought a solution. Here perhaps was one at last!

She sat down and wrote:

Your letter comes to me [she began abruptly], at the hardest moment of my life. When Allan left me, he took my soul away with him. Ever since, he has been in

every thought, day and night. If he does not come back to me, if God does not bring him back to me, I might as well be dead. My life will be as that of a dead woman. I have left Minniglen. I am going to a hospital, to work. Thank you for writing. You and Allan are the only two beings in the world that have given me happiness! May God bless you both! If you think this letter wild, please forgive me. Sometimes I feel half mad. Oh yes, do write when you see him! Tell me all about him; how he looks, what he says—above all what he says about me. If I could see him again, just once, as in those days—they seem so long ago now!—when we were so happy. I should not ask anything else again.

ANNE.

When the letter was sent, the burden was lightened yet more; and though she dreaded the ordeal of the answer, she looked for it with a passionate anxiety.

It came when she had been already a few days at St. Timothy's. She read it in her cubicle, at her first moment of leisure, aching in every limb from weariness, hardly able to see out of eyes dazed with fatigue. It darkened all her hopes.

Lady Grizell chided her roundly for weakness unworthy of Allan's wife. The right kind of love made people proud and strong and silent, not floppy and vociferous. She could not believe that Anne belonged to this class of mere germinators. It was quite obvious she was not well. Lady Grizell proceeded to disapprove, in no less strenuous terms, of the idea of hospital work; and announced that she was going to write to Allan on the subject and make him order his wife

back to Minniglen. She could not think how he came to allow it. If her own work, over there, had not been of so urgent a nature, she would have come back to "look after you, you silly child."

Anne hurried through all these phrases. She was looking only for the name of Allan. Ah! here it was again!

Allan does not think that he can get any leave, even to come to me for an hour. It is a disappointment to me; and will be one to you. But we must both bear it, and that cheerfully, with the rest.

He would not go. She might have known it. She crumpled up the letter in her hand and lay back against her hard pillow. It must be borne, with the rest.

CHAPTER XXIX

TIME spent in a strict routine of hard work passes with rapidity. When the hours of the day are scarce long enough for the duties allotted to them; when the hours of the night are all too short for the sleep of the exhausted; when each week as it drops away is precisely like its fellows, life slips through the fingers like a string of beads. After the first pangs of initiation, the autumn and winter months which Anne spent at St. Timothy's Hospital seemed to her to have gone more swiftly than any other epoch of her life. When the sights, the sounds, the smells had become things of infinitely less moment to her than the necessity, and the power, of helping: when the immense fact had become clear to her that, with negligible exceptions, the fortitude of every wounded man was nobly equal to his burden, her tasks, monotonous and painful as they were, became a labor of love.

It was not that she grew hardened (as some undoubtedly do) to the piteous spectacles, but that she soon realized that to be worthy of those to whom she ministered, her spirit must rise to their own level, she must put aside all sterile grieving. She must "be a Veronica, and not a wailing woman."

The atmosphere of the ward had ever to be one of studied cheerfulness. When the legless man asked the new nurse for his socks, she had to join in the shouts

of laughter that invariably greeted the sally. She had to speak lightly of operations, and show a professional interest in unusual wounds. Perhaps, had she not been, inevitably, so set apart from all sympathy herself; perhaps had she felt that anyone cared whether she was tired out or sad, or tried by fate beyond the limits of endurance; if there had been anyone whom she could have asked to share with her even the impersonal sorrow of some special tragedy; if anyone, in fine, had cared whether Anne McClurg lived or died, it might not have been possible for her to pursue her way without a breakdown.

Anne had not a particularly strong character. She had been egotistic all her life; and, in a certain spiritual way, emotional. But she appreciated ever more the truth of the shepherd's stern axiom: "Patience and endurance are the ribs of the soul." Daily she had the sight of hundreds who had given themselves for an ideal, and who, broken in body, remained unconquerable in spirit. There are very few complaints in the wards of a military hospital. Anne learned how great is the virtue of silence; learned that it behooved her to be silent even in compassion.

And so, panoplied in a new armor, she was better able to face the silence that had thickened round her own private anguish. She had answered Lady Grizell's letter as well as she could, but had had no further sign. Jane Joscelyn, the busy spinster, absorbed in very worthy schemes of war work, could speak or apparently think of nothing else. Anne, indeed, saw little of her. The companions of Nurse McClurg's night

watches; those who sat down with her to meals, and slept in the cubicles next to hers, never heard from her lips a word upon her intimate concerns.

Busy women have, fortunately, little time for curiosity. There was, nevertheless, a certain stir of interest in the hospital about Anne. It was known that, though not a widow, she received no letters; yet that, day after day, she would turn white when the morning paper came in; and that she always showed a particular interest in any "case" that belonged to a certain Highland regiment.

Meanwhile she was becoming an efficient nurse, and was promoted from the cutting of bread and butter, and the carrying of trays, to the taking of temperatures, the fomenting and bandaging of wounds. The convoys of wounded would arrive—sometimes at shortest notice—at any hour of day or night; and then the resources of the hospital, and all individual energies, would be stretched to their utmost. On these occasions her rigidly repressed anxiety would leap into flame. Breathlessly she would scan the badges on the soiled tunics. Now and again she would break the matron's rule and inquire of some conversational newcomer if he had been anywhere near the Highland division and had any knowledge of the doings of Allan's battalion. Very few Jocks came her way. No one seemed ever able to give an answer to her craving questions.

One morning—she had been on night duty—Anne had retired to her cubicle for that sleep which is part of the conscientious nurse's obligations. It was never easy, however, for her to turn day into night: and she

lay broad awake, with wide eyes fixed on the dingy curtains of her cubicle, her mind far away in the glens.

She was perhaps more than usually tired, for she felt less able to shut her mind against unprofitable melancholy and yet more unprofitable dreaming on the might-have-been. If she had not blundered; if she had not fooled away her own happiness in a sheer piece of sentimentality—for it had been nothing else: the scaling of a dream castle, when she had such a dear reality for her own—how content she might be, even now!

Yes, even (or so she thought) if the worst were to happen, and Allan were to yield his young life for his country, they would have had one month of perfect union, perfect sweetness. They would have been out together on the moors, seen them spread nobly about them. That rock, which she had wetted with her tears, they would have sat there together, the golden cup of the hills would have held them. And nothing could ever have robbed her of a memory exquisite and sacred. Now she had no recollection of Minniglen that was endurable. Those hopes that had been pushing up shy green spikes—even as now the snow-drops she had noted yesterday in the February bleakness of the park—had been blighted, had withered away in the frozen soil of her heart.

A panting V.A.D. rushed in upon her sad dreaming. This girl had developed a craze for the mysterious Nurse McClurg. Anne, when she remembered the child's existence, had a dim sense of gratitude towards the only one, it seemed, who still felt warmly about her.

"Mrs. McClurg!—a convoy has just come in, and

there is one of those Highlanders among them. He is in number Three ward, and Sister Hudson wants a nurse to help with the fomentation. Though you were lying down, I thought you'd like to go, and we really do want every——"

Anne had already jumped out of her camp bed, and reached with trembling hands for the pile of clothes that lay on the chair beside it.

"I can't stay," said the girl wistfully, "though I'd love to help you, dear Mrs. McClurg—but I can't stay."

She ran out; then thrust her rosy face in again through the curtains:

"Oh, I do hope, I do pray, he may be able to tell you what you want to know!"

"Dear me!" said Sister Hudson sharply, "is that you, Nurse McClurg? Didn't Nurse Williams tell you what I wanted?—Fomentation, at once, please."

Anne went out obediently. The ward had seemed to be filled with strange eyes all staring at her. Perhaps it was because she had been thinking so weakly of Allan that she had now such an unreasoned sense as of impending event. Mechanically she fetched the appliances and went back into the ward. A deadly coldness was growing upon her, springing from the seat of life itself and spreading all through her veins. She came forward like one sleep-walking.

The sister knelt on the floor, by a red-headed boy who was seated on the side of his bed. She was stripping the bandages from one of his legs. Anyone unaccustomed to a war-hospital would have imagined the pa-

tient to be drunk: his eye was wild, his face deeply flushed; he was waving one arm in ceaseless flourish, and saying the same thing over and over again, in a kind of chant:

"We went in, I tell you, the finest regiment of the lot. And wull you tell me what's left of us? Wull you tell me that—what's left of us?"

The occupants of the adjoining beds, leaning on their elbows, were observing the scene with much interest. Unmoved, the sister proceeded with her task.

"Gauze, please, nurse," she ordered briefly.

The high confused voice went on with its piteous refrain:

"Wull ye tell me what's left of us?"

"You tell us, sonny," said one of his neighbors, humorously.

The Highland lad turned on the speaker. He had understood. His blue eyes flashed a frantic fire.

"We went over the top, a thousand and ten strong. And we cam' out twenty men, and one officer. And him blinded!"

Anne heard herself cry out:

"His name!—Tell me his name!"

But before the answer came, before the poor distraught gaze could come back to her, the dreadful presence of her hours of agony had already spoken. She knew.

"I will not believe it," she cried. "His name? His name?"

"Nurse McClurg!" rebuked the sister, amazed and furious.

"McClurg!—Aye! McClurg it was." The sing-song took up the name. "Captain McClurg."

Sister Hudson was very fond of telling the story afterwards, with a special reference to her own providential escape.

Nurse McClurg had incontinently and most unprofessionally collapsed; and only the mercy of Providence had enabled her—Sister Hudson—to spring away in time from the boiling water that was spilled all over the place.

Anne's life, which had moved all these months like a slow stream under the bondage of ice, was suddenly flung, in storm and tumult, as with a great plunge, into deep seas. And she was buffeted this way and that, as though by contending waves.

Hardly had she come out of her swoon before Jane was with her, bringing a telegram from France which had just reached the flat. It was from Lady Grizell; and Miss Joscelyn, scenting bad news, had taken upon herself to open it. More, with a practicality that did honor to the brain of the new woman, she had acted upon its instructions, before conveying it to her niece.

Allan wounded, sent England, apply Southampton debarkation officer for address.

AUNT GRIZELL.

Thus the dispatch had run.

Anne never remembered exactly the sequence of the events that ensued; for the bitter waters were over her, and she was as one cast helplessly upon their mercy. She had a dim recollection of the battle royal which

Jane fought with the matron. Nurse McClurg was a useful V.A.D. The hospital was working at full pressure; it did not seem right that anyone should claim a release on mere personal grounds.

But Miss Jane carried her point. Perhaps Anne's white face and her recent lapse were cogent arguments. Anyhow, Anne found herself free. She was at the flat again.

There were telegrams and telephone calls, and presently she was in a taxi, with Jane beside her. The tide was bearing her to Allan. To Allan at last!—But how? Her very soul was drenched. Her eyes were dry and burning, all her tears were inward—"The waters had come in, even unto her soul."

Jane spoke now and again, shooting out small sentences designed to brace and sustain: "You've got to keep up, you know, my dear. And it mayn't be true after all. Men never know what they're saying when they come out of action. The matron said that. She's a disagreeable woman, she certainly had no desire to spare your feelings. Grizell's telegram is cheerful. I thought it quite cheerful."

Presently she took Anne's hand.

"We're nearly at Brooksbury House now."

The name caught Anne's attention and brought her back momentarily from the dread waste on which she was being tossed, at such illimitable distance from kindly shores. She turned her stricken face upon her companion.

"Did you say Brooksbury House? Why are you bringing me there?"

"My dear Anne!" Miss Joscelyn's voice had a quaver of alarm. "It's where your husband is. Cordelia's got a hospital. For officers, you know. My poor dear child, the whole thing was discussed with you not ten minutes ago!"

"I forgot," said Anne.

Miss Jane fixed her with anxious eyes, debating within herself the advisability of allowing anyone in so obviously shattered a condition to confront further emotion. The taxi dived in through the open gates of the courtyard in which the ancient Mayfair mansion stands, and Anne took matters into her own hands by jumping out, almost before it had stopped.

They were admitted into the hall by the very last thing in V.A.D. smartness: a young person with the highest heels and the reddest lips (Jane thought) she had ever seen; one who contrived to impart to her nun-like uniform an unspeakably sly air of rakishness. She gave the visitors a stare of surprise so pronounced as to be inimical. Anne was still in her nurse's garb; and the damsel looked her up and down with contemptuous inquisitiveness.

"Tell Lady Brooksbury, or whoever is in charge," said Jane severely, "that her cousin, Mrs. McClurg, is here and——"

At the name, the girl's face had changed; she fled up the stairs with an aspect of alarm. Not before, however, she had cast another glance upon Anne; a glance which Jane caught with a sudden sinking of the heart.

"How can I wait?" said Anne.

"My dear, you must have patience."

"Patience!" That was, at the end of it, all that Duncan Cameron had given her to hold on to. She must hold on to it still. But he had said something else to her; that she was to be a Veronica. Oh, he had foretold this hour! Here was the test. Here was her meeting with Christ on Calvary. She must be a Veronica, not one of the wailing women.

CHAPTER XXX

THERE came down the stairs a measured footfall. A contralto voice, hushed to a pitch of exquisite softness, murmured into space:

"Anne—dearest Anne!"

Lady Brooksbury, with floating veil and whisper of gray skirt, alighted in front of them. Before Anne knew what was happening, she was engulfed into an embrace of intolerable sweetness; felt her own cheek cold against a warm scented cheek; heard Cordelia's kiss in the air. Then she was held at arm's length; and disengaged herself with a desperate self-control.

"I am told my husband is here. I must go to him."

"Yes, my darling. Yes, my poor darling.—Oh, Cousin Jane, what a meeting!—Come this way, Anne."

She led them to a small room off the hall.

"My office." Here Lady Brooksbury abandoned for a moment the melting feminine, to become the perfect Florence Nightingale. "I am commandant. It all rests on my frail shoulders; but the strength is given me. I have to be firm, even with a breaking heart.—Sit down, Anne darling. Sit down, Cousin Jane. I must communicate with the sister in charge; we must take no risks, for life comes before love—even before your love."

As she spoke she sank down at a writing table piled up with papers; pressed an electric button at her hand;

and, drawing a notebook from the pocket of her apron, began to scribble on it with a frown of much concentration.

Another V.A.D. appeared. Anne recognized Lady Penelope Masters as one recognizes a fantastic figure in a dream. Cordelia tore the leaf off and extended it.

"Take this, my child, to Sister Massingham, and bring me the answer—swiftly," she added with a dropping bell-like note.

As Pen vanished the commandant turned to Jane, who sat on the edge of her chair, her small face firmly set, her small hands tightly clasped, her black eyes fixed with their most expressionless intensity on Cordelia in her new rôle. Their glance met, and Lady Brooksbury instantly loosened a cadenced flow of speech.

"How beautiful our Anne looks! More beautiful, I think, than ever, in her great sorrow.—A madonna! Has she not the face of a mourning madonna?" Cordelia gave full value to the Italian double *n*. "I do not mean the Mater Dolorosa, worn with years and sorrow, but the young madonna, the Madonna of Simeon's prophecy when the sword of sorrow first began to pierce her tender heart; all in her young joy——"

"Dear me!" said Jane in the very driest accents that had ever fallen even from her lips. "I don't think poor Anne wants to hear about her looks just now. She's in great anxiety. Perhaps you have forgotten that."

Cordelia turned a slow gaze of grieving reproach upon her matter-of-fact relative.

"Ah," she exclaimed, "do you think I do not under-

stand? Dear Cousin Jane, you are so downright! Must I not do what I can to prepare our dearest one for——"

"You need not," interrupted Anne hoarsely. "I know."

Lady Brooksbury gave a low cry intended to repress a sympathy beyond words. Nevertheless there was a faint yet perceptible shadow of disappointment on her hungering, beautiful face.

"How brave she is! Our blood cannot lie. Doctor Sargent always says to me that I am the bravest woman he has ever seen. He likes to have me there, present beside him, if there's a critical operation. We have a wonderful theater, under the roof——"

"Theater!" echoed Jane.

"An operating theater, Cousin Jane. Oh! how sad it all is! I think it is my love of beauty keeps me from just dying under the accumulating tragedy. I find such beauty in all this great sorrow, such nobleness, such heroic splendor. I say to my soul: be worthy."

The door opened and Pen reappeared.

"Sister Massingham says, commandant," she announced in pertly professional tones, "that she has no objection to Mrs. McClurg coming in, for a minute or two, if she does not speak to the patient, or otherwise disturb him."

"Show Mrs. McClurg the way, Nurse Masters, if you please," said Lady Brooksbury, becoming the distant commandant without any transition.

Then with the swing of the pendulum she expanded towards Anne again.

"I will not go with you, darling. You want all your strength, and you would feel my sympathy, too, too keenly. To suffer and be strong," said Lady Brooksbury, casting up her fine eyes, "one must suffer alone. And you'll be very quiet, won't you, darling? Not more than five minutes, please. You'll just creep in and look at him—not speak. He won't know you're there, poor, poor fellow. We've put him by himself, in my little garden room. It is so quiet, so peaceful.—And, here, take him this."

She detached an enormous bunch of Parma violets from her belt and thrust it into her cousin's hand.

"I like," she said, "to go about them whispering of the sweetness of gardens. They love me for it, poor boys!—Our Lady of the Violets——"

Pen was standing motionless, her round white chin in the air, in an attitude of docility that was in itself an insolence. As Anne, not in the least aware of her own action, laid the flowers on the desk and moved towards the door, a broad red smile parted the V.A.D.'s lips.

Lady Brooksbury had broken off. She resumed with her extra mellifluousness

"Won't you take them; dearest?—Even in unconsciousness the fragrance must be grateful to his nostrils. Ah! to think his eyes will never be able to see their shadowy loveliness again."

"Cordelia!" said Jane in the tone of one restraining the uttermost exasperation, "I don't think Anne can follow poetry, just now. Let her go with the young woman.—Shall I wait for you, dear?"

"Wait for me!" Anne turned round on the threshold, startled out of the profound concentration of her thought.

"Yes, dear," said Jane, as if speaking to a child. "I will take you back to the flat, and bring you here again in the morning. You want a good night's rest."

"I shall not leave this house," said Anne, "as long as my husband is in it."

"Come this way then, if you please, madam," said Penelope, with as much zest for play acting as her superior.

Anne had a vague physical consciousness that this pretense of not recognizing her was an expression of Lady Penelope's hatred. She had no room in her mind, however, for speculation on such a point, or she might perhaps have remembered poor Sidney Hanks and her own unwilling interference with another's hopes and schemes. She followed her guide across the great hall, down a passage, through a swing door. Here they were met by the sister, who received Anne as if she had been a parcel.

"That's all right, Nurse Masters, thank you. No—I'll hold the door open, if you please. You let it slam last time."

Lady Penelope tossed her head ostentatiously and walked away without a word.

The sister, a severe looking, elderly woman, watched the buoyant figure disappear, with a satiric smile; then she drew Anne from the inner lobby in which they stood, out into the corridor again, and carefully closed the door.

"There is nothing so disturbing for a patient as people whispering outside his room," she paused and surveyed Anne critically but not unkindly. "Mrs. McClurg, I understand. Nurse yourself, I see," she hesitated. "Are you aware of Captain McClurg's condition?"

Anne tried to answer; but only had an inarticulate sound in her throat.

"Oh, dear, no," said the sister, replying to some silent agony of question, of which Anne herself was not aware. "He's not conscious; but that's only natural; and indeed, all the better for him. The surgeon, I may tell you, thinks he ought to do very well now, if he's kept in the necessary quiet. Though he was not best pleased at their having let such a case travel. It was during the passage that Captain McClurg became unconscious. I don't approve keeping a wife altogether away from her husband. One never knows if the patient is not fretting, even when he seems unconscious. But I warn you: there must be no emotion. For the present—the patient is blinded."

"I know that," said Anne. "Let me in."

The sister cast another look at her; then, without further speech, ushered her into the lobby and, opening a further door, signed to her to enter.

This room, which Cordelia Brooksbury, in a fit of sentimental generosity, had dedicated to the worst case in her hospital, was apparently her own special sanctum. Its decorativeness was the result of one of those sudden freaks of Cleopatra splendor in which this high-souled lady indulged after too long a course of the

simple life. The February day was gloomy; and the long windows, giving on the garden, admitted only a kind of yellow gray glimmer which the lovely word, light, would ill become. Nevertheless, Anne's first impression was one of such radiance and color that it seemed to her an intolerable setting for what she knew it contained. The walls were enameled, shading from the deepest tones of ultramarine to sulphur flame blue, ribbed into palm stems of gold, that spread out on the ceiling into fans of gold. Gilt lattice work sheltered the windows, green marble tesselated the floor.

In these lavish eastern surroundings, hasty sick room arrangements struck their piteous note. But Anne had no thought to spare, either for the rough square of drugget under her feet, for the hospital tables, or for the nurse's armchair and other discrepancies—she had seen the iron bed protruding grimly, the figure on it with head and eyes swathed in bandages. No need for drawn curtains; no fear of any offending brightness!—The skirling Highland voice rang in her ears: "We cam' out twenty men and one officer—and him blinded!"

A new strength filled her, the courage of one whose every energy is bent in the service of another. She went over to the bed, and stood there, silently. What she could see of his face under the bandages made her falter, but only for one throbbing second: it was as the face of a stranger. The next instant she knew him for her own. It was piercingly familiar, though incredibly altered, sharpened, darkened. His lips were

set into a line so rigid that she thought his teeth must be clenched. Head and hands moved continuously. From time to time the whole prone figure faintly started. The gestures were not wild, but so unresting that they gripped her heart with a special pain in the midst of illimitable grieving.—Those dear hands, how thin they were! What were they seeking in that vague, purposeless fashion? Then she said to herself: "He is questioning the darkness. Even in his unconsciousness he has already the actions of a blind man!"

The sister came up behind her, soft footed as a cat in her felt slippers, and pushed a chair against her knees; then withdrew to the window and took up her interrupted knitting.

Time stood still for Anne, as she sat there watching; every minute an eternity, charged with immense mystery. The room had a curious inner hush, concentrated about the restless sounds that came uninterruptedly from the bed—the uncertain heavy breathing, the dreadful regularity of the just perceptible rustle made by the uneasy bandaged head, the clenching and unclenching of the outflung hands. Even the distant roar of London was like the rush of a river emphasizing that guard of human silence.

Two other sounds presently grew into her consciousness, and they, also, were of watchfulness: the secret, stealthy whisper of life in a well-banked fire, and the tick of the watch in the sister's belt.

Suddenly he cast his arm towards Anne; his hand fell palm upwards, his fingers grasped; then, as if disappointed, unfolded again. She put her own hand in

his. Had she paused to reflect, she might not have dared; but the impulse was irresistible. Instantly his fingers closed upon hers. He was holding her as if he would never let her go. She bent towards him. Her desire to help, to comfort, to strengthen, was, in her sorrow and love, almost an ecstasy. If she could have drained her life into his, if she could have plucked her eyes from their sockets to give him back his own, she would have done these things. She wanted to steep him in the essence of her being; to fold her tenderness about him; to draw him into her soul, as it were, and uplift that precious burthen upon a prayer that should rend Heaven.

Still he held her; now and again there came the twitch that each time startled her with its tale of shattered nerves. Yet presently it seemed to her that his restlessness was less, the turning of the head on the pillow not so heart breakingly frequent. The unnatural contraction of his hand relaxed: the hard breathing was easier, the tormented unconsciousness was passing into a natural sleep.

With scarcely any more noise than a moth the sister rose and came over to her. Motionless, Anne warned her fiercely with her eyes. But the woman, after an intent professional scrutiny of the figure on the bed, gave her a nod, and went back to her work.

An hour, perhaps, had elapsed, when she again laid down her knitting. The air was coming in chill through the open window and the fire must be seen to. She placed more coal on the red embers; each lump was

wrapped in paper to insure noiselessness; then she stole across to the bed. The blinded soldier, his face turned quietly on the pillow towards his wife, was sleeping like a child. She, too, was sleeping, with head dropped forward beside their clasped hands.

CHAPTER XXXI

"IT is all very well," said the sister, "but you can't keep it up."

They were in the garden of Brooksbury House, where the February sun made a symphony of pale gold and black among the bushes, and the snowdrops, peeping through the grass plot, each had a primrose cheek where the rays caught them.

The doctor looked at Anne. He was a young man with an uneasy manner and a habit of thrusting his hands into his pockets when speaking to a lady. Perhaps it was the commandant's way of extending white, scented fingers in clinging appeal, that had driven him to this expedient. His eye was shrewd, and not unkindly. It was now fixed with professional interest upon his patient's wife. Anne's face seemed almost transparent in the delicate morning light, but silent endurance was written on her folded lips, and determination burned steadily in her eyes.

"I am accustomed to night nursing," she said quietly.

"But not night and day nursing," objected the sister irritably.

"Well, I have had my rest after all, yesterday." Anne had even a smile with which to answer.

Doctor Sargent was still meditating upon her. He was new to practice, but, in war time, experience is not reckoned by ordinary measures. He had those powers

of observation and deduction, above all of intuition, without which no physician or surgeon can excel. The sister, on the other hand, was a creature of rote and rule. There was a flush of exasperation on her cheek bone, at the thought of any V.A.D. so flagrantly outraging the consecrated system.

"If Nurse McClurg," she insisted, "really wanted to make herself useful, she would choose either day or night. I have no objection to either, myself; but it is not in human nature to do both. Sister Finlay tells me that every time she looked in, through the night, she found Mrs. McClurg holding the patient's hand. And Nurse Raphael, who had been directed to sit up with him, was very much put out—and justly so."

"Whatever happens," said Anne, "I am not going to leave my husband to the mercies of a V.A.D."

"And what are you, I should like to know?"

"I am his wife." Anne smiled again.

The doctor wheeled round on the sister:

"Did not the patient have a good night? Isn't he astonishingly better today?" The questions apparently answered themselves, for Dr. Sargent went on briskly: "As long as you can keep it up, Mrs. McClurg, I say, by all means keep it up—in moderation. Better let Sister Massingham take night duty. We won't trouble Nurse Raphael again, just at present.—Supposing now, while I'm with your husband," his tone had that managing benevolence which doctors so often acquire, "you seize the opportunity for rest."

"She has not had her clothes off her back since yes-

terday morning," interjected the thwarted disciplinarian.

Neither of the two heard her. Anne's eyes were fixed on the doctor's face; and he knew very well what they meant. Even a doctor will shrink from the sight of pain that is beyond his help. He half turned away, and dropping his glance became apparently absorbed in the contemplation of the gravel path.

"I do not yet know the extent of my husband's injuries."

Anne's voice was low, but it was firm, and it had not lost its quality of sweetness. The doctor switched his glance upon her; and once more scrutinized; weighing and summing up. Her hands were clenched: delicate, beautiful hands as pale as ivory. But she stood erect; and her gaze did not flinch in its questioning.

"Captain McClurg has three shrapnel wounds in the head. Serious but not necessarily dangerous. Symptoms seem to indicate this morning that progress may be very good. He has, beside, shell shock, not to a pronounced degree. I have seen very much worse cases. But it is too early to form a definite opinion. With regard to the sight——" He broke off.

"I should like to know,—the whole truth."

He tested her for a silent instant; then he said, rather loudly:

"I don't know myself. No one can know. The eyes are not destroyed, and there are instances where sight has returned, as completely and as suddenly as it was lost."

Anne drew a long breath. The fact that she might

hope at all was so immense that she could hardly keep from falling upon her knees and praying aloud in gratitude. Allan's eyes, his wonderful far away, luminous eyes!

The nightmare image of what might have lain hidden under those bandages was swept away.

"What do you think yourself?" Her voice trembled now, hovering upon an unbearable possibility of joy.

Dr. Sargent shrugged his shoulders.

"I don't know, you want the truth. You have a right to it. If you asked forty oculists, I don't believe they could tell you any more." He ground his heel into the gravel; thrust his hands deeper into his pockets. "If you want a special opinion I have not the least objection of course," he said ungraciously, "but——"

"But there is an objection."

With a humorous twinkle he acknowledged her acumen.

"Yes, there is. I consider it highly inadvisable that the patient should be roused in any way; above all to a sense of his actual condition. I want him to remain practically unconscious as long as he can. So that——" He paused and changed the venue of his speech. "It will be a pretty considerable shock, when it does come."

Once more he was looking away. He kicked the stone he had been guiding, then said briskly: "Now, sister, if you please," and turned towards the open door.

With a swift, soft rush, Anne overtook him.

"Let me be present at the dressing," she urged. "I could be of use,—later I can go away and rest a couple of hours."

Doctor Sargent nodded assent; then stood back to let her pass before him.

"That's a well plucked one, by George," he said to the sister, who, in answer, sniffed all the dissent she could not utter. Then he unceremoniously preceded the injured professional into the Cleopatra room.

CHAPTER XXXII

"IT is the most beautiful thing in all the world," said Lady Brooksbury, her fine eyes swimming in the tears which she was careful not to shed. "Darling Anne! You know how unique she is. How——"

As she paused for the right word, the listener put in, with no great enthusiasm:

"Pretty——"

"Oh, no, dear Miss Bradles. What a word to apply to Anne! exquisite, mysterious, poetic, wonderful! Lovely, if you like, not pretty. There are no cheap effects about my cousin Anne. I always say she is the spirit of the race incarnate. Our race. My precious mother was a Joscelyn. Ah, if you could see Anne in her veil, as she sits there, hour after hour, watching, yearning! It's a more beautiful love drama than Tristan and Isolde. She loves him. I never saw anything like it. It is a revelation!—I have always felt," said Cordelia, placing her hand over her heart, "that such pure passion must exist in the world—somewhere. And I am glad to have beheld it with my own eyes. Sometimes I find myself almost rejoicing in the sorrows that have brought forth so glorious a flame."

"Well, it's a comfort to find somebody rejoicing, nowadays, even if it's over other people's bad times," said Cherry with a ghost of her peppering laugh.

Miss Bradles, indeed, looked like the ghost of her former self. The smug vivacity of her countenance had given place to an expression of peevish anxiety. Although her black garments were of the most fashionable description—beaded and be-furred—no one could mistake, looking at her pinched, sallow face and tear-dimmed eyes, that they were the symbol of true mourning. Her perpetual attempts at brightness were all the more pathetic.

"I'm sure," she went on, now winking away a moisture very different from Cordelia's sentimental dew, "I'm sure I often say to myself: I'm glad my dear Carrie was taken in time out of it all. She never would have got over Sid's death. Never."

"Ah, yes, poor Captain Hanks!" said Lady Brooksbury, and her tone indefinably relegated Miss Bradles' nephew to a plane upon which even grief must be of a bourgeois quality. "He, too, loved our Anne. She is a woman to inspire great passions. It is a fatal gift," said Cordelia, absently gazing at herself in the Venetian mirror over the chimney piece, before which she was standing, one arched foot upon the fender. "And a great responsibility, I assure you, dear Miss Bradles. I sometimes do not know whether it is a blessing or a curse, this power that a woman unconsciously wields over the souls of men. Doctor Sargent—my hospital doctor—so clever, such a splendid, strong, silent man! You know the kind. One guesses all the time the immense feeling that lies behind the iron reticence."

Here Cordelia became beautifully self-conscious;

glanced at the mirror again, smiled, sighed, and went on.

"It seems to me I always know the thoughts of people's hearts, if one may so express oneself. He thinks me very fragile. It quite weighs on him to see me expend myself upon others. Two or three times he has been almost rough, just because—just because—well, dear Miss Bradles, just because I can't think of myself. At first he could not bear to see me sitting, hour after hour, beside one or other of my poor boys. I always sit where they can see me, you know. 'Do go and lie down, Lady Brooksbury,' he would say. 'Or go out for a walk, or anything, to take you away from the ward.' Or yet again: 'You're perfectly nonsensical!' he will exclaim. 'Dear Doctor Sargent,' I told him one day, 'I don't try to keep you away from your work. Why should you try and keep me? The worst that can happen is that you should have another patient.' 'Oh, God forbid!' he exclaimed, almost with violence. It was a real *cri du cœur*. I just gave him one glance. Poor young man, he grew scarlet! Of course it was a revelation, but I have let everything go on exactly as before. He is the soul of honor. Now, when he passes me at my silent labor of love, he only—looks. He understands I must do my bit—my little bit. And, in his heart, he applauds. He knows I am giving them fresh life, dear gallant fellows, and that I would not grudge my own life in such a sacred cause. But then, poor darlings, sometimes I ask myself: 'Ought I to have done it?' Might it not have been better—better for them, I mean, for their happiness, their peace of mind——"

Even in affliction Miss Bradles was not one to allow another to wrest the lead of conversation from her for any length of time. She now, at the first opportunity, broke in with her dauntless simulacrum of sprightliness.

"Don't be too hard on them, dear Lady Brooksbury! I mean, don't turn their heads more than you can help, while you're feeling their pulses. I should not let them look at you, if I were you. No, really. That veil is too becoming! I am glad Anne Joscelyn—I beg pardon, Mrs. McClurg——" she spluttered sadly, "is only fascinating her own husband. Two sirens, in one hospital——"

"Dear Miss Bradles," Cordelia's gaze was at its most tragic, "you would not jest, if you knew—Captain McClurg—nay, I will call him Minniglen, that beautiful, knightly name—he lies stricken." Here her tone effectively dropped an octave lower. "Yes, unconscious. And my poor Anne sits brooding over him. I verily believe holding him on to life, with the grasp of her two frail hands. I sometimes go into the garden and look through the window just for a sight of her face. She is an image of the most noble woe. As I said to Jane Joscelyn—my cousin Jane—three days ago, when they arrived here—'she is like a grieving madonna, like the young Dolorosa when she first knew'—I dare not tell her that my secret prayer is that the poor, splendid fellow may pass away, that his soul may go out, as it were, just borne into infinity upon that immense tide of love. The light of eternity, would it not be

better for him than the darkness which is all that awaits him here?"

Cherry, who had been shifting her dull jet bag, brushing inexistent specks of dust from her corded silk knee, vainly endeavoring to fasten the first button of her over-tight suede glove, and exhibiting every other sign of restlessness during this harangue, here looked up sharply:

"Life of darkness?" she echoed.

"He will be blind," said Cordelia, fully appreciating the value of a voice like hers upon a word so dramatic.

"Gracious!" exclaimed Miss Bradles, inadequately. Yet hers was genuine emotion. "The fine young fellow we saw, that day we all lunched at the Berkeley? Do you remember, dear Carrie was so bright, and in such good spirits, in her lovely Réville gown! How little we guessed! And there's poor Sidney lying out in Flanders. And Guinie—she's in the duchess's hospital, you know. And Warren and I, alone. I do what I can to keep up his spirits. And it's very good of you to say we may have bright little Pen to dinner tonight. She, somehow, cheers him. No one can look at Pen," laughed poor Cherry, "and not feel that there's some joy left in the world. I wish we could tempt you in, too, one day. Oh, I know you're very busy. Yes, of course. But you must find time, at some hour or other, to munch a cutlet, mustn't you? and it's only a step round to Grosvenor Square. A cup of tea, then? With some of the *petits pains fourrés* my darling Carrie was so particular about. Warren is generally in at tea

time. I'm sure he would love to show you the design for Carrie's monument in our little church at Glenorchar—or, rather, Carrie's and dear Sid's. Mother and son! We shall have him brought over, after the war."

Cherry's face quivered; but she proceeded, with melancholy gusto:

"It will be the most beautiful thing. Quite *Cinque Cento.* Warren inclined to the Oriental. But I said: 'Nothing can beat the Italian art—of the fifteenth century. Mino da Fiesole, you know. Of course, rendered with all the modern enlightenment. Carrie in her robes, Sid in field uniform. He will be, as it were, watching her. The whole thing in alabaster, marble and porphyry. You talk of the beauty of sorrow, Lady Brooksbury. After all, there is something beautiful in this gathering together of every earthly gift, wealth, talent, energy, imagination, to create a memorial of lasting splendor to the beloved dead."

"Quite too charming, I'm sure," yawned Cordelia, languorous and bored. "I must not keep you, dear Miss Bradles. I have got," said the commandant, warmth and interest again growing into the voice as the enthralling topic of self came uppermost, "I have got to think of the living. My every moment is now dedicated to the service of the young life of the country, to keep that precious flame burning in the beautiful shattered vessels. I will ring, and summon Nurse Masters—we sink our ordinary identity here. I am commandant, you know. I love the name."

Lady Brooksbury pressed the electric button and returned to the contemplation of her countenance, so

becomingly framed in the frowning folds of the veil.

"You should hear my poor boys, the way they say it! Commandant! You would feel what it meant to them. They hang on me. I must go, dear Miss Bradles. Good-by! It has been delightful seeing you. Ah, Nurse Masters. A visitor for you, nurse. Yes, I will come round, one afternoon, and have a cup of tea. Some day, when I feel I may draw a breath. I'd like to meet Lord Weyford, and tell him about my hospital. He's so generous. Yes, we want funds. He must arrange to pay us a visit. Good-by. Don't keep Nurse Masters more than five minutes, please. Remember she is on duty; we are all on duty—sentinels in the great war."

Anne had been a dreamer all her life. Now that she was plunged into realities, cruel enough to tear every shred of illusion from her, every hopeful sophistry, she was a dreamer still. Hour after hour, she sat, as Lady Brooksbury had not inaptly described her, brooding over her unconscious husband; and, in that forced inaction, her soul traveled, suffocating, through abysmal depths and struggles, upwards; towards a height, arid indeed, but where yet it could breathe and live.

Of her world, which had gone down under so complete a cataclysm, there now remained to her, as it were, but a single peak out of chaos; self-immolation. She must forget herself for another. No sacrifice could be too great, if it brought alleviation to the beloved. She had vowed herself to love him, honor and obey him for better, for worse, in sickness or in health. How she would be able to fulfill that great vow in its entirety

—since two of its clauses in her case might, alas, forever oppose each other—remained the tormenting secret of the future. Yet, for the moment her dedication was complete. She was a chalice brimmed with the fine wine of love. Her single desire was to pour it forth. The fact that it was only drop by drop she could give him made it almost a physical burden.

Visions passed through her mind, as of old; long processions of people, through shifting scenes; yet all now in a new light. Phrases that Duncan Cameron had spoken flashed with dazzling meaning. Once, even, in a singular mystic way, she saw his thought-picture in actual being before her eyes. That first morning, when she had helped to unroll Allan's bandages: the restless head had found repose on her arm; beholding the open eyes, shadowed, clouded, unseeing, yet beautiful still; beholding the knotted brows, the features fixed in endurance, and, even in unconsciousness, such courage and patience, etherealized, set about with the already marked growth of auburn beard; when she had seen the red wounds that crossed the forehead, there had been something divinely familiar in the sight. She remembered the countenance that had looked down upon her from the crucifix at Minniglen. She remembered the shepherd's words: "He will come to you in the shape of every poor wounded lad." Here was her Calvary, she was indeed Veronica.

A little later, when she found herself alone with him in all the barbarous splendor of Lady Brooksbury's Egyptian room, which seemed to mock in pagan exultation at the plain white bed and the stricken soldier

—even as the Pagan mocked at the Victim on the Cross —she knelt down and prayed as she had never prayed before. And her prayer was all for strength to sacrifice, for help to comfort, for power to heal and sustain and serve to the extent of her love.

It was then that she heard him speak for the first time. His mind was wandering far in the past, both from the deadly inaction of the trenches and the savage exultation of the attack. He was far, even, from their brief joyful hours of intercourse, or their heart-rending quarrel. He was roaming about the glens, bent in light-hearted quest of sport; calling his dogs and his gilly; crying "ware cock!" and "good shot"; and even laughing. So that, while she was glad to think of him free and content, at least in spirit, she was wrung by the piteous contrast.

Oh, would Allan ever again look at the blue sky and see the beat of wings against it? Would he ever again watch the ling part for the eager passage of the laverocks? His existence had been planned altogether for the open. To be indoors at all had been for him a mere accident; a concession to the exigencies of modern life. His spirit was forever out on the hills. Even in his dreams, as now in delirium, it was busy tramping the moors, calling the dogs, keen on the game, with the old primitive zest of his forebears to whom life was as one long day's chase, only to be given up when the night closed.

The night had closed about this son of the hills at full midday. Would the unnatural darkness ever lift from him? If not how would he bear it?

She could not picture him to herself; an Allan blind, dependent, hampered at every step. "We McClurgs are the deer of the forest." He who had said, too, with his child's lips: "I'd rather break my neck any day than walk about taking care of myself."

Yes, she could more easily see him dead in his glorious youth, than groping his way through the world. She had been promised: "Minniglen will come back to the heather." How could she fail to put faith in prophecies, some of which had been already so mysteriously fulfilled? But was it thus he was to come back to Minniglen?

As the happy phase of his wandering passed, and the unquiet seeking returned, she once more clasped his hand; and once more found that he grasped back, clung, and held, and seemed soothed. Her heart gave a great cry: "If we but cleave together, even such a fate may become endurable!"

On the third day of her watch a letter, bearing the Field stamp, arrived, forwarded from the flat.

It was faintly scrawled in pencil. It was holding her husband's hand that Anne read the lines it had written on the eve of the tragic attack.

Aunt Grizell has sent me your letter. She kept asking me to go and see her. And then she wrote, asking what had happened. She said she knew, now, we had quarreled.

I wrote back that it was our affair, mine and yours. Then she sent me your letter. I have had it a long time. I don't ask you to forgive me. I have a hard, bad heart, I know, and a devil's pride. But I never stopped loving you. That made me worse, harder. You won't understand.

I can't understand myself. But a man can't be out here without understanding one thing—the horror of black hate. Our fellows don't hate, and that's why they're so splendid. All the men are writing home to-night. And, Anne, Anne, after all I may never see you again! I meant, I wanted, to die. And now I want to live and come back to you. It would not have mattered being killed a bit, if things had been right between us. It would have been just glorious. But now I'm all broken up. I have learned a lot. I can't write any more. No time. I could not write anyhow. I never could say what I feel—much less write. But if there's anything to forgive—oh, no, that's wrong—— It is you that have got to forgive. Forgive me, my sweet Anne! Whatever happens, think only of the lovely days, before the mistake. It was just a mistake. I shall be thinking of you as you were that morning I brought you to Minniglen.

ALLAN.

There was a postscript, very carefully written, with brighter pencil marks:

You are to live at Minniglen. I think I shall come back to you there somehow.

She was alone with the wounded man, in the jeering splendor of the blue room. His fingers tightly clasped about hers, Allan lay, for the moment, very still. She could not tell whether it was sleep or unconsciousness, but it was certain that the mutual clasp continued to bring comfort to him.

She looked down now at those interlocked hands. "To have and to hold," she whispered to herself; and the first tears she had shed since her summons to his side poured down her cheeks. He had come back to

her with his last deliberate thought, in all the strength of his manhood, of his own determined will. Whatever happened, here was an abiding comfort.

He stirred: turned his head as though trying to see through the bandages; his palm twitched against hers. Quietly, as often before, she began to stroke and pat him, in motherly touch, with her left hand. Groping, yet deliberate, he sought for it. His fingers fretted, testing, seeking; then closed upon her wedding ring.

She held her breath; it was a sound as groping as his gesture that issued from his lips:

"Anne."

"Allan!"

In the long pause that followed, she could hear her own heart beat in great, laboring thuds. Presently as one gathering himself together out of drowning deeps of mists, he made a movement upwards towards her, and she loosened her grasp to slip one hand under his pillow, and so draw him to her breast.

Then, in the midst of that keen and trembling joy, a joy that hurt more than grief, she saw, with indescribable apprehension, his uncertain gesture towards his bandaged eyes; heard him mutter that it was dark.

"Darling," she murmured desperately, "not yet! Not yet, my beloved!"

And, hardly knowing what she did, she bent and laid her lips upon his. He kissed her back, with the old cry, so faint now: "Anne, Anne!" Then, with a long sigh of deep content: "You and Minniglen!" he said. And she knew he had drifted away once more; that her kiss had sent his spirit hovering upon the hour when

he had lifted her across his threshold; the hour of their homecoming.

"He is sure to find out," said Anne, "next time his wounds are dressed."

"Oh," said Doctor Sargent airily, "we'll put him off. We'll tell him it's a temporary affection of the optic nerve. It may be that, after all. Stay, though, it might set him fretting and that would be a thousand pities. So we can just keep him going for a bit, by covering his eyes with a separate bandage, and telling him that they're not strong enough to bear the light. That will keep him from indiscreet investigations."

He laughed and thrust his hands still deeper into his pockets. The February day was drawing to a close; and, as they paced the garden, the leafless trees, the high, grimy walls were drawn as with charcoal against the yellow sky. Dr. Sargent was in high spirits over his patient's progress, and indeed was pluming himself on having managed a difficult case with great credit. He looked askance at the tall, pale woman by his side, pleasurably anticipating the acknowledgment due to him. In spite of Lady Brooksbury's illumination on the subject, the young surgeon was a man rather contemptuous of than susceptible to feminine influence. But Mrs. McClurg interested him to the point almost of disturbance. He respected her silent ways; appreciated her quiet deftness, her intuition, her capacity, her admirable suppression of all personal feeling, the while passion amounting to tragedy was written in the lines of her beautiful mouth, in every quiver of her

nostrils, and every slow, questioning look of her deep eyes; more than all, perhaps, in the patient clasping of her ivory pale hands.

They were clasped now. She walked with the free rhythmic step which had so stirred the plebeian fancy of Sidney Hanks when, crossing the courtyard of Orchar Castle, that day of mists, hastening away from him, she had irrevocably walked into his heart. Her head bent, she went, with a scarce perceptible murmur of the blue nurse's skirts. Now and again, a gust of mild air would set her veil streaming. As with the ill-fated Sidney, perhaps what most appealed to the excellent middle-class young medical man was her high, delicate breeding; the indefinable atmosphere by which she was surrounded as is the violet by its fragrance. He was now watching her face, in the hope of seeing its rare smile directed upon himself. As the silence was prolonged, he said:

"It is always better to tell a good lie while you are about it—don't you think so?"

They were at the end of the restricted space; both turned and faced each other. A sparrow was chirping insistently on the blackened lilac bushes.

"But the truth has to be told in the end," said Anne.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"It will come home to him somehow. No doubt about that. But the later the better, that is my point of view."

He gave her a sudden smile, with strong white teeth.

"Keep it up for two or three days, anyhow. It will

all be so much gained. Come, Mrs. McClurg," he went on impatiently, as he felt opposition, not to say disapproval, in her muteness and immobility, "it's getting late and I have not any time to spare."

He was rattling his keys in his pocket. The tone conveyed to Anne how little he cared. One blinded man more or less to pass through his hands in the great war. It was his business to put his patient on his legs. It would be somebody's else to see what could be done for the sight. Mrs. McClurg might think herself very lucky to have her husband at all.

CHAPTER XXXIII

WHEN Anne came into the room the next morning, from that abbreviated night's rest which was all she allowed herself, Sister Massingham greeted her with her elaborate professional cheerfulness.

"Captain McClurg is wonderfully well, this morning, Mrs. McClurg. He had a splendid sleep, after you left him. He is really quite himself. Now, however, is the time—I'm telling him—that he must be extra careful."

Anne paused at the door and looked at the long, lean figure on the bed; propped up with pillows after the fashion that proclaims the first stage in convalescence. She never crossed that threshold without being stabbed at the heart to miss the look with which even a dying man will greet his nurse. This morning she felt, as so often during the last twenty-four hours, his effort to pierce the darkness and reach her face.

"Captain McClurg has had such a good breakfast," went on the sister, "but he is really getting quite naughty. He wants to feed himself! He wants——" Her tone, forcedly jocular, was here supplemented for Anne's edification, by gesture and grimace. "He wants his bandages off! He wants to know why they are kept on over his eyes. I tell him that Dr. Sargent is very particular with head wounds; that he has found it best to keep all light from the patient, until——"

She broke off. Anne had reached the bed and put her hand on Allan's. He instantly gripped it.

"Tell that woman to go away."

The stare of affront which replaced the confidential airs, the self-important pantomime, passed unheeded by Anne, who turned and said gently:

"Will you please leave me alone with my husband?"

When the door closed—with more violence than became such a disciplinarian—Allan withdrew his hand from his wife's touch and shifted himself higher on his pillows.

"Anne," he asked, "what has happened to me?"

She knelt down beside him, so as to bring her face on a level with his own. She knew that there was but one thing for her to do, at all risks: to tell him the truth. She had no time for reasoning out a conviction so complete; even for hesitation, hardly for fear.

"You have been wounded in the head, and all is healing. You are doing very well. But nobody can tell yet about your sight."

There was not a movement from him. His hands lay supine on either side. She understood that, in this complete stillness of his whole body, his spirit was actively grappling with tremendous issues. At last he said:

"I feel my eyes."

Her voice trembled, as she hastened to explain.

"They are not touched. I have seen them."

"Take off that bandage, then."

She hesitated; but his hand went up. And, in silence, then, with deft nurse's fingers, she unfastened the wrap-

pings about his brow. The moment his eyes were freed, he put her from him, and sat up.

Here was the look she had felt behind the bandages: the straining of the eyes to fix and concentrate; the uneasy turning of them from side to side.

"Yes," he said at length. "I am blind."

Anne swallowed the anguish in her throat and answered, bravely:

"For the present. The sight may come back. It does sometimes, they say, quite suddenly."

"And sometimes it doesn't. Is that it?"

"Yes."

Again there was silence. Then he said:

"Thank you, Anne. I see——" As the last word slipped out he interrupted himself and smiled: "I mean, I understand."

She fastened up the diminished bandages and knelt down again. His eyes, rather weak and shadowed still; strange, fixed eyes with the outward vision gone from them, now uncovered, made his face with its new worn look, its soft growth of beard, more unfamiliar. Yet, to her lingering gaze, the boyish Allan of old was ever discovering himself. And each discovery was heavy with recollection, poignant with contrast.

For a while there was silence. Throughout the scene, both had spoken with the utmost quiet. He took the sentence from her lips—the sentence which was worse than death—as the soldier his orders. Instinctively she was aware that, even as there could be no outcry, no lament, either from him or her, so at this hour of supreme test, there could be no caress, no word of

love. They were standing shoulder to shoulder, as comrades in the muster before the start for battle.

Her love for him had passed through many a phase. It had been founded and nursed on illusion. Then, caught in the tornado of his young passion, from under his lover's kisses there had leaped new and breathless ardors; things unreasoned, confusions exquisite. Then, again, upon their parting, the agonies, the vain and piteous yearnings, the remorse, the brooding thought, the little hopes that sprang and died, the whole long drawn out probation intolerable with menace, of which every hour had held its terror and its prayer—all had culminated in this moment. She had never known him until now.

The shepherd had said to her: "There must be great worth in a love that holds so much sorrow!" Oh, it was true, there was great worth in their love.

After a while he put out his hand and felt for hers, drawing it to his lips. Then he said:

"Anne, my sweet wife!"

It was as a renewal of their marriage vows. She understood, too, that the noble silence with which he had received the tidings of his doom would only deepen as the days passed and its tragedy accumulated upon him.

Upon Sister Massingham's irate report of Nurse McClurg's interference with doctor's orders, commandant promptly turned the affronted official, and her tiresome feelings, over to matron. She herself sailed down upon the Cleopatra room.

Like some beautiful vulture she scented morbid emo-

tion. As she took seat beside the blind man, she felt a real pang of regret that he should be unable to appreciate the effect of her cameo pallor, of her veiled, dark head and her slender, gray-clad grace against the gorgeous blues. She imagined herself: a lily outlined upon an eastern sky.

"Oh, Captain McClurg—nay, you are my cousin: shall it not be Allan? Let me take your hand. I am your cousin, Cordelia Brooksbury. Tell him, Anne—Anne and I have been as sisters always. Nay, then, I will call you Minniglen. Is not that a name for a knight? Oh, that it should be thus that we should make acquaintance!"

"How do you do," said Allan, as he shook the clinging fingers and firmly withdrew his own.

"Isn't it piteous!" went on Cordelia, in a stage aside to Anne. She was careful that he should at least hear the tears in her voice, since he could not behold how tenderly they welled into her lids. "So young, so handsome, so stricken! Is he not like Sintram, dearest? Splendid and doomed!"

"Who is Sintram?" asked Allan, after a slight pause. "Is it a game? If so, it's not playing fair: I don't know the rules."

"Ah, you dear, quaint fellow!"

Lady Brooksbury shot a look from silent Anne to her ungracious husband—and from that moment, dismissed them from any place in her special circle.

"Is he still wandering, dear Anne? Ah, well, we can hardly wish him, can we, ever to understand how things really are? Lie and rest. Here I will lay a

little bunch of violets near your hand. Violets! Are they not the flowers for such as you, with all their beauty in their scent? 'Violets dim, sweeter than the lids of Juno's eyes.' Ah, Anne, forgive me, dearest, the words escaped me. I did not mean to hurt. How ill you look, darling, much the worst of the two! But then it will be so much worse for you, always, won't it? It always is for the woman. God bless you."

She rose, swept to the door; there paused:

"I know, Anne, dearest, that you meant for the best. But was it wise to disobey medical orders? I think I ought to send Doctor Sargent to you at once. The shock, I fear, produced just the effect he dreaded. Sister Massingham is terribly upset."

"Is she gone?" asked Allan, as the door was softly closed.

Anne stood, suffocating between indignation and a sudden misery. Her heart had been stabbed by every bodkin thrust of Cordelia's malice.

"Phew! Open the window wide. What a woman. What a beastly scent! Throw her flowers out. She's a bit cracked, isn't she?"

Anne came back to the bed, having accomplished his orders. She was biting her lips to keep back the tears. No, she could not, would not stoop to notice that most spiteful of all Cordelia's thrusts: the one that had passed her by, perhaps, to find its mark in him. Steadying her voice, she said at last:

"She is not mad—only bad."

He laughed suddenly.

"You are angry. Anne, we will get out of this

place, as soon as possible. I am doing fine. We will get to Minniglen, you and I. You and I," he repeated.

His voice, which had rung strong and deep, here became veiled in the well remembered way. "You and I." It had been once, in the pride of life, in the lust of vigor, "you and the war!" And, a little later, in triumphant rapture of love, "you and Minniglen!" Now that he lay there, a stricken, a perhaps forever broken man, it was "you and I." And that was the best of all.

She drew a long, tremulous breath. She bent, and they kissed. They were together again, in a deeper, truer, infinitely more sacred understanding. One in thought; one in feeling. No need for protest, explanation, even assurance, in a confidence so complete.

When Doctor Sargent presently appeared—in no very good humor, and with an aggressive effect as of washing his hands of the whole business—Allan surprised everyone. The young man, extraordinarily cool and determined, amazingly vigorous in himself, was no sooner made aware of the surgeon's presence than he shook hands with him; and, after a few words of thanks, reticent but sincere, thus stated his view of the situation, issued his instructions.

"I am quite well, practically, except for my eyes. I am altogether blind. I must have the best opinion, immediately. I'm thinking I had better have the two biggest specialists at once."

"Tomorrow, if you like," said the doctor, sharply. "As I have already said to Mrs. McClurg, I have no objection to such a course."

"But I'm thinking," said Allan, with quaint Scottish caution, "that I'll not have the two oracles together. I've seen them at their consultations! What I want is the truth."

There was a little pause. The surgeon looked sideways down at the speaker. Allan was sitting up, scarcely supported by his pillows, his young hands expressing, in their very quietness, power and will. The same two great components of human quality were written in every line of the face; in the jutting jaw, the jutting brow; even in the sightless eyes, not restless now, not seeking what they could not find, but fixed as upon some point which the mind at least could vision. Doctor Sargent had not yet come across, among all his gallant patients, anyone so hardy of frame, so invulnerable of soul.

There is no class more jealous of its authority than the medical—let us hope, owing to its consciousness of immense responsibility. But Doctor Sargent, disobeyed and defied though he was, could not withhold a feeling of admiration for his unruly patient.

"And if opinions disagree?"

He smiled, rather sarcastically but not unkindly, as he spoke. And, with the intuition that comes all too quickly to those deprived of a sense, Allan smiled back; that wonderful smile of radiance and boyish sweetness which, from the first, had stirred Anne's heart.

"Try a third, to umpire, perhaps," he announced. "Or pick out the one I like best. Anyhow, arrange to get out of this place, and make room for a fellow who

wants nursing. You just set that going for me, won't you?"

Dr. Sargent briefly assented. He could not deny, after the dressing, but that Allan had been correct in his own diagnosis: healing was proceeding apace. The patient's whole condition made manifest the reassertion of an iron constitution.

"You took a great risk," said the surgeon, sourly enough, to Anne, a little later, as she went down with him to the office to look up addresses and telephone to the specialists he recommended.

"I should have taken a greater one," she said quietly, "by opposing him. I know my husband."

"You had no business, no nurse has any business, to think of any patient otherwise than as a patient. It's a matter of discipline, a matter of honor. Few women have any sense of either."

His ill temper increased as Anne looked at him with indifferent eyes; he had perhaps a sudden base impulse to reach her somehow. For he added:

"I am not altogether so charmed as you are with the look of things. Captain McClurg is too well, in my opinion."

Her glance questioned.

"The symptoms point away from mere shell-shock blindness," he went on.

"You mean——"

"I mean—just what I said." He was already ashamed of himself, and the unaccustomed feeling gave an edge to his irritation. "Don't build on his being given hope."

Anne stood staring. All the morning since that kiss of perfect reconciliation, she had carried a kind of light of exquisite, pure joy about her, as though, still wading knee deep in bitter waters, a lovely dawn were reflected on her brow. Now, for one second, that light went out. Her countenance was blank; her eyes dark. But the illumination sprang again, as of some rare flame intensely burning, increasing. The man stared back at her, altogether confounded. Then she said:

"Whatever happens, nothing will rob him of that—of hope. Nor me. And the word is not hope; it is faith."

As she returned to her husband, it seemed to her as if the scholar shepherd went by her side in a great beneficence.

She knew, now, how true had been those high things he had said to her. How certain it was that a man had a soul, and that it was the soul that counted. Glorious from the test, Allan's soul rose before her like a knight in armor. And what was its armor but patience and endurance, virtues that she, in her weak ineptitude, had scoffed at? "Exaltation, agonies and love; and man's unconquerable mind." But, Duncan Cameron had said, "it should run, man's unconquerable soul."

That evening, Allan of himself spoke of Duncan Cameron—of him who had so singularly, in all unconsciousness, both brought them together and driven them apart.

She had been sitting by the bed, and there had been a long silence between them, for Allan, silent by nature, was more silent still now, by fortitude. She was knit-

ting soldiers' wear—the occupation which has become scarcely so much work as habit with the women of England, whose thoughts are always with the men. Her gaze was more upon him than upon the needles. Save for the white bandages about his head, and the unlit fixity of those eyes that had once been more luminous than any she had ever seen—except the shepherd's—he looked quite like himself. The sharpened, suffering air was gone from his face. The altering beard had been shaved off. He appeared to her younger than ever; but there was a stamp of settled peace in his mien that gave him a new dignity.

Suddenly he began to speak—it was for the first time—of his battle experiences.

In spite of rigid censorship, facts come to light, especially in hospitals and places where, after a great action, odd remnants from a division will be flung together, like spars from the same wreck. The half-crazed Highland lad had indeed cried the truth. The regiment which had gone over a thousand strong, had come out barely twenty, with but one officer, "and him blinded." Anne had hoped that, in his affliction, her beloved might be spared the knowledge of the glorious tragedy. But, as soon as he spoke, she realized that, with returning memory, there had come back to him a singularly close understanding of all that had passed, even in the confusion of conflict.

He had seen them all go down, he told her. All—from the Colonel to the youngest sub. The best set of fellows ever a man had been thrown in with. The right sort. And the lads, too—the best of lads.

"How many lost from Minniglen?" she asked, all her ruth in her voice, as he paused.

His lips folded closer upon each other for a second, the only sign of emotion she saw him display. Then he said, with a sudden lapse into his native speech, and it rang to her ears very piteously:

"Aye—there'll be wae i' the glen." Then he went on.

"We were up against their concrete, with the machine guns playing on us. It was as if you were to set the waves to break into the rock. Ah, but we did it. For it was high tide with us. It was man against mechanism, it was heart against metal. I'm thinking," said Allan, and he smiled, "they knew what they were doing when they picked our kilties for the job."

Anne gazed at that smile, amazed. It was so content. Then he gave her, in a brief sentence or two, a few impressions of the struggle, laughing outright over the recollection of his fair-haired namesake, Allan Stewart MacIan, who had kicked a German helmet before him like a football right up to a gap in the wires, and so gone shouting into eternity, as if Death were a great game; how they had cleared the trench; were enfiladed; yet hung on until at last only himself and the Colonel were left with their handful. "And then the Colonel went, and soon after, came the shell that did for me." He paused.

"I would be loath," he resumed at last, "to be picking, when all ought to be in the honors. Yet there are two or three that have deserved the highest—the two or three that kept the others holding on until

I got my wits back, and could show them that they had an officer left—though no more than a voice. 'We'll do it yet, sir, if you'll keep calling out to them now and again,' one of the lads kept saying to me. He got me up, and I hung on his shoulder. And he was eyes to me, and turned me this way and that. And I'll never know the name of him! Aye, I'd like fine to take him by the hand. Aye, by the Lord, he deserved the V. C. But there would have been no one to send in his name, even if I had it. And I'm thinking," said Allan, musingly, "it's just as well: the best are in the silence. There's the Colonel himself, he sat on the fire-step where he was hit. 'Hold fast, bonnie lads! Hold fast, my darlings!' He was crying it to the last. Ah, you'll think it a strange thing, Anne; and I was thinking it a strange thing myself, till I felt it in the marrow, the love that we have for the men! There is nothing like it. It passes a lover's love; that I should say that to you! For it's not the bodies of them we love, but it's the spirit, the souls! We'll lead them to death, and we'll see them smashed before us, and glory in them! But we'd no see them fail, our hearts would break over that! Aye—it's a strange thing," he repeated, and again gave a laugh.

"Oh, Allan!"

He could not see the tears that poured down her cheeks. She could not understand, only marvel.

Was it the war that had given this soul such depth and such serenity? Or was he one apart among men, one apart even as his kinsman Duncan Cameron had

shown himself? So indeed might the shepherd have spoken.

In mistaking them for each other, she had not been so far wrong, after all. "Deep calleth unto deep, at the noise of thy floodgate."

Even as these thoughts crossed her mind, Allan pronounced the name of Duncan Cameron.

"It is time I should speak of him," he said. "I've been wanting, from the moment when I felt your lovely hand hold mine, to tell you something. And it was this. I didn't know what it was. Only the want to speak the word that should be between us. Anne, I saw the man, him whom you took me for, my ain uncle—my grandfather's son, if the truth be spoken. I got to know him, just between one minute and the next, so to speak. And then I understood. Yon was a grand chap!"

"Is he dead?"

Anne hardly knew what she was saying. But she had to speak, for Allan paused. It was an idle question that ill represented the turmoil in her mind. She was so afraid of again sinning by some stupid, mistaken phrase; of wounding him, or failing him—she that had deeply wounded, wholly failed upon that point where love and pride alike were vitally at stake. Allan, his sightless eyes turned in her direction, went on:

"He was not in my company. But I kept coming across him and hearing of him. Anne, I hate to talk of it. I hate to think of it. I was a brute to him. I have always been a brute to him. I couldn't forgive him his existence at all—it comes to that, I take it—

and, having him set like a living shame on his bit feu at Cairndonach. Aye, the shame is mine. I know that. One learns a lot out yonder! But the first thing one learns, I reckon, is the worth of a man as a man; and the trash that is all the rest, when it comes to giving and taking death. He was a great power among the men; and would get them about him, talking. Well, I called it preaching. Cant, I called it. I was set against him: he couldn't do right. Well, he got hold of the sergeant major of my company, as rank an old soldier as ever got drunk on the sly: I found the old scamp losing his bottle nose and reading his Bible, and biting down his swears, as they would keep hopping up. I said to him: 'I'm thinking we've mistaken our job, and it's a Wee Free we are setting up here, with Corporal Cameron for meenister.' And—well, every Scotchman has a Covenanter somewhere inside him—the fellow said to me: 'Sir, when it comes to the next fighting, you'll ken the worth of Corporal Cameron. This is no ordinary war,' he said, and he had me there. 'You've got to side with Christ or with Satan, in this conflict, sir. Yon Cameron is teaching the lads how to fight with Christ.' I laughed at him, Anne. But, topsy turvy as it seems, I—and I'm no hand at speaking of such things at the best of times—I couldn't but see he'd got near the truth. You've got to believe, out there, or literally go to hell. And by the Lord, didn't our lads fight clean! Clean and noble! And there was not one that did not carry the memory of Duncan Cameron, that day, like a flag."

"He was killed before, then?" said Anne, as Allan paused.

"Two days before. I shall always be sorry," went on Allan, musingly, "that I never got a word with him. I told you how I sort of blocked myself against him, heart and head both. He was my own kin, and his death was—well, worthy of him, though one or two of his own officers were very angry, and called it rank waste, breach of duty, what not!"

And when Anne heard the story of how the shepherd-scholar had died, she thought that, even as Allan had said, it was an end worthy of him.

It seemed that, on that particular morning, at dawn, in the awful discolored swamp of "no man's land," with its nameless refuse, between the trench the Highlanders held, and that of the Germans, a prone figure was perceived, so encrusted with mud that it was impossible to tell to which side it belonged. Yet there was life in it, for every now and again a hand would be raised and dropped. There was some discussion; field glasses were produced, and finally an officer declared that he could see the point of a German helmet. The fellow was a Hun. It would be certain death to attempt rescue, for the enemy was wide awake. But a sigh of relief went up. It was only a Boche. The hand moved again more feebly, and one or two men laughed.

"It was then," said Allan, "Cameron came down the trench and saw. He stood a moment looking. Someone offered him a glass, but he waved it away. You remember his eyes—yes, McClurg eyes, Anne, they see far."

The blind man stopped short for a moment, and folded his lips. Anne knew that she must not even touch his hand. He proceeded again:

"I was standing there and saw Duncan's face as he brushed by me. 'Man, what are you doing? D'ye no ken it's a Hun?' cried one of them. 'I ken it is a fellow creature,' said Duncan. And with that, he looked at me, Anne, and he was smiling! It was a kind of farewell. Aye, I mind it well. It comes back to me, time and again. There was a lot in that smile; understanding, forgiveness. Aye, and a sort of brotherly love. And, with that, he crawled over the top, and not one dared to lay a finger to stop him. We stood watching. He went cautious. He was never the man to take a risk for the show off—too grand a soldier for that. But he got to the poor wretch in safety, and we saw him lift him. And it was a Hun, sure enough. And he got him along a little way, and those German devils set to firing at them both. Yes," the speaker smiled at his wife's outcry, "that is the way with them, Anne, their devil's way. At first we thought he'd do it. Then he was hit. He staggered and fell, and was up again. Up with his burden. And just then, the shelling began. A shell caught them, and that was the end. They're buried together—there, in that mud—Duncan and his enemy."

The listener felt a mystic shudder pass over her. She recalled the shepherd's prophetic words.

"Maybe he was a bit daft, maybe he was," went on Allan, musingly. "But it didn't matter, we're all daft out there. He did his work and I'm thinking the lads

might perhaps not have fought just as they did, nor held on as they did and saved the day, if it had not been for him. He showed them how to face death, anyhow. And I've got a kind of picture in my own mind," said Allan, "of the grand company they are together, he and his lads, those that fought the good fight."

The result of a consultation of doctors is, generally, as unsatisfactory as that of counsel's opinion. You are given every aspect of a question, and left in the end to take your choice.

"It comes to this," said Allan to his wife afterwards, "they don't know any of them; but they leave me the benefit of the doubt. I can take a sporting chance. Now I've made up my mind. I won't undergo treatment that may deprive me just of that—my sporting chance. But I'll not be building on it, either. I'm going," said the young man, and if ever determination was written on human countenance it was on his, "to live as if I were sure I was to be blind."

"Yes, darling," said Anne gently as he paused.

"Don't be misunderstanding me," he exclaimed, with one of his luminous smiles. "I'm going to live as if I wasn't blind. It can be done. There was a man used to come and tune the piano for Aunt Grizell; and he was blind, but you wouldn't have known it. And one day when I was there, I was going to jump up and help him along, poor chap; but she held me back. 'No,' she said, 'Mr. Watt has been here before.' Anne, he came through the room without a falter, and laid his hands on the piano and pulled the whole thing to pieces, and you'd never have known, as I was saying,

except that his eyes were different. Being born blind, you know, makes them look different. You'd never have known. He was earning his bread as well as, and better than, another man. It can be done."

"Yes, Allan," said Anne again.

"He was awfully happy. The happiest looking creature I ever saw. I'll be happy, too."

"Yes, Allan," she answered for the third time, steadily.

Lady Grizell arrived, without any warning, on the afternoon of that day. Anne went down to her, to the commandant's elaborate office, with a beating heart. Did Lady Grizell know and how would she take it? Might it not be worse for her than even for them; she, who, with all her lifelong devotion, stood outside the sacred circle where love and courage made so bright a light?

But the moment she laid eyes on her, Anne understood that, if Allan had inherited the hardness of the McClurgs, he had taken much of the spirit from her side of the family.

"My dear child," cried the dauntless lady, before Anne could speak. "I've seen Jane. I've heard everything. And I'm very happy. God has been very good to us. Yes, I know, he's doing splendidly. And all is right between you two. Yes, yes. I know there's a hope, just a hope. But we are not going to build on that. He's got to take up his life. Oh, he'll do it. I know Allan. I know my boy. I know the McClurg grit!"

She paused, breathless: kissed Anne two or three

times, patted her. Anne saw how the elder woman's lip trembled on her brave smile; saw the beads upon her brow. Lady Grizell, for all her valor, seemed strangely aged, her fine air of elastic strength broken, her gracious proportions shrunk. But the soul that looked out of her eyes was as indomitable as that which perhaps would be forever shattered in her boy's countenance.

"You're together," she repeated. "He's got you—that's everything. And you have him—that's everything. And both of you will have Minniglen, and that will be a great deal. God has been very good to us. I can't say anything else. My heart's full of gratitude, and, oh, my dear, the things I have seen, the sorrow, the partings, the agonies, the deaths! Take me up to him. Anne"— she caught the girl, with a hand that trembled ever so little—"he'll hear his children's voices, and the sound of their feet about the place, one day. That will make up for all."

EPILOGUE

MINNIGLEN, *April* 4, 1915.

Dear Aunt Grizell [wrote Anne], such a glorious day! How I do wish you could be with us, this wonderful Easter. The whole air breathes Resurrection. It is like the Good Friday music of Parsifal. Ought one to hate Parsifal now? Somehow I can't. It never was German; it is true Christian, and I always thought Allan like the young Parsifal.

How long ago it seems that night, when I saw Allan down in the stalls. Oh! and that reminds me, poor Lady Weyford's memorial is being finished off, with diminished splendors, and there are rumors all over the place that Lord Weyford is going to marry Penelope Masters! This is only a parenthesis.

Allan is out in the glen. I shall never lose my sense of anguish when he sets off in this independent way. But the one thing I can do for him is to stand aside. He grows more independent, more daring, day by day. If I listened to my heart, I would go after him, like the laverocks, always. But you will be glad to hear I don't. I don't even charge him with warnings. I sit at home, with my heart jumping, listening to every sound. He is so well, so extraordinarily vigorous and strong. Never was there so splendid a race. Allan is granite. I lamented over it, once. Now I know better. It is glorious, for I have built on the rock. I hope this is not profane!

I am in my turret-room, where I was once so unhappy. And every day I pray before the crucifix. You remember

it, and how beautiful it is. It hangs just above me as I write now, my prayer is always the same: "Lord, that he may see!"

Once, Aunt Grizell, when I was in black despair, I prayed before that figure, so steadfast in tenderness and pain, and it seemed,—no, I am sure, that I was answered. Then I hid away a long letter, full of love, misery and explanation, that I had written to my boy and had not dared to send him. And I prayed that I might give it into his own hand, see him read it. It is still there. It is not wanted, it never could be wanted, now. But I have a sort of superstition: it would be like giving up hope, to tear it up.

And yet, oh Aunt Grizell, what a price we pay for all our joy! Is not that the strange, mysterious law which the Cross itself forever preaches? We are bought at a great price. Supposing the miracle happened—it seems to me I am always hearing of some such story—then he would leave me again! Nothing could keep him. His whole heart is out there with the men. There is hardly one of his regiment left. But it does not die. It goes on, new and fresh and glorious with the old spirit and the old tradition! Don't think me dreadfully base that such a thought should cross my mind. God knows I would not keep my darling blind, one second, even to keep him safe. But the heart has its treacheries.

Oh, Aunt Grizell, it is such an exquisite day at Minniglen—to think he can't see how the moors are glistening and shimmering, and the birks just breaking—and the streams amber and gold and silver, and all of them talking, after the rain.

EASTER DAY, Seven o'clock.

I must add what I can to this letter, and supplement my telegram. Oh, Aunt Grizell, what will you say when you get it!

I was just writing to you, this morning, when I heard him shout, far away in the distance: "Anne, Anne!" I rushed to the window. Of course I thought something had happened to him—my haunting dread realized, an accident! Then the shouts came nearer, and the dogs were barking. And then I saw him. Running, Aunt Grizell, running up the approach, leaping. And the laverocks leaping. And, as he came, he was still shouting, "Anne, Anne!" and I thought for one awful moment that my darling had gone mad!

And then, as I stood, rooted at the window, staring, he looked up—and oh, Aunt Grizell, he saw me! *He saw me* and waved his hand; and with one great leap he seemed to clear the space and stood underneath the window. He was dripping from head to foot. And the sun was on him, his dear red curls were all sparkling. He was radiant all over—but the most radiant was his face, and the eyes.

The rest is confusion. I trembled so much I could not get down to him. But he ran up to me. I heard his foot on the stone, bounding up four steps at a time, and then I was in his arms!

And now he cannot stop looking at me. We went out into the glen together, after he had changed and was dry, and we were both a little sane again. We went together and looked at the tarn into which he had stumbled—where he might have been drowned—but which must have been stirred by the angels' wings. Blessed pool of Siloam to us, where he has found healing!

Then he told me—you know how silent he is—what he had so long kept to himself; how before his poor blinded eyes there had always been dreadful visions of the mud, the smoke, the horrors of battle—nothing but that, always—and that, when he opened them after his fall, and sud-

denly saw the moors silver and shining, and all bathed in the spring sunshine, and all the little leaves and the great beautiful white clouds; and his own old keep, gilt over the gray, standing there before him, it was like coming from Hell to Heaven; and then he said he had only one thought left; to see my face.

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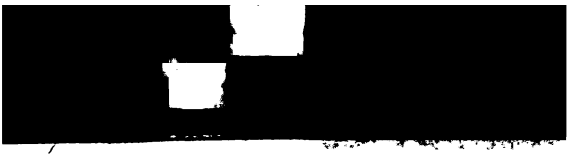
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